SATSANG PARICHAY

Pragji Bhakta

(Bhagatji Maharaj)

Pragji Bhakta

(Bhagatji Maharaj)

Translation by: BAPS Sadhus
Gujarati Text: Sadhu Ishwarcharandas

Inspirer: HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj

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Blessings

The youth movement established and nourished by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj has been expanding at a very rapid pace. With a view to satisfying the aspirations and the thirst for knowledge of the youth joining the organization, and also to enable them to understand and imbibe the principles of Akshar and Purushottam expounded by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the publications division, Swaminarayan Aksharpith, organized under the auspices of Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, presents a series of books.

Through these books, it is intended to impart systematic, sustained and pure knowledge in simple language on a scholastic basis to children and youth of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. It is hoped that this Sanstha, established by Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj for implementing and propagating the Vedic ideals propounded by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, will, through this activity, spread the ideals and noble traditions of the Sampradaya and through it, the culture and heritage of the Hindu religion.

It is the aim of this project to preach and spread the divine message of Bhagwan Swaminarayan to all corners of the world. We hope that all religious-minded truth-seekers of the Sampradaya and those outside of it, will welcome this activity and extend their fullest co-operation.

In order to encourage children and youths, annual examinations are held based on the curriculum as worked out in these books. Certificates are also awarded to successful candidates. We bless Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Prof. Rameshbhai Dave, Kishorebhai Dave, and all others who have cooperated in the preparation of these books.

Shastri Narayanswarupdasji
(Pramukh Swami Maharaj)
Jai Swaminarayan

Vasant Panchmi
V.S. 2028 (1972 ce)
Atladra

Publisher's Note

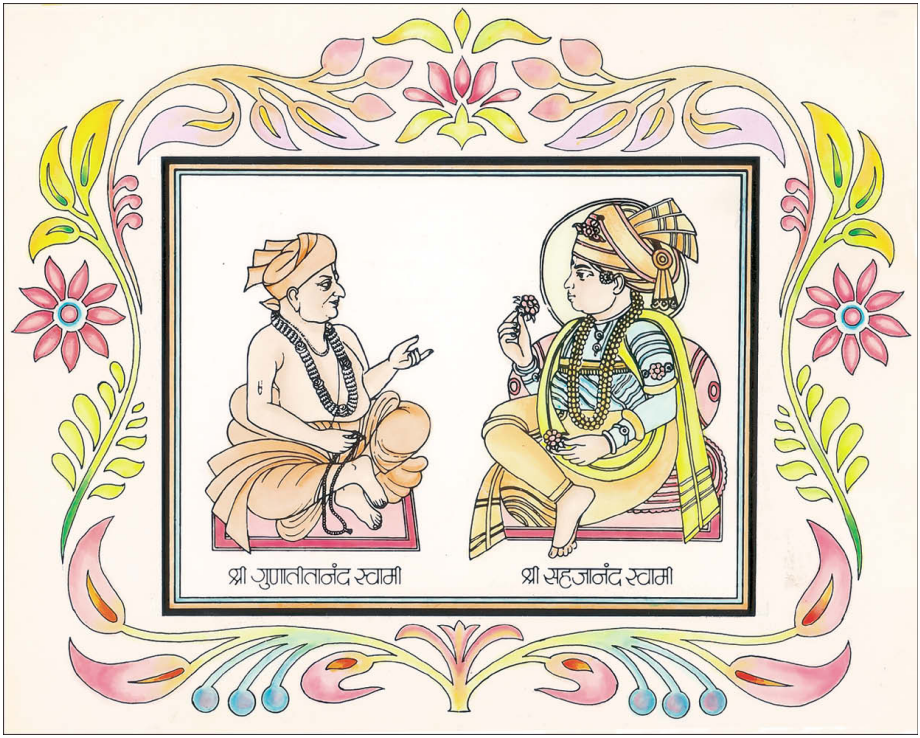
Purna Purushottam Shri Sahajanand Swami out of compassion and grace incarnated on this earth. During his life on earth, he inspired many to attain the highest spiritual state. The lives of these sadhus, and male and female devotees serve as an example for all on how to worship God and attain his divine bliss. Shriji Maharaj's work has been continued by the lineage of God-realized Sadhus he established. Spiritual seekers who have associated with them have also attained the ultimate spiritual bliss.

This publication, *Pragji Bhakta*, contains the short biographies of a selection of such sadhus and devotees since the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. It is a translation of the Gujarati book Pragji Bhakta.

The book is part of the curriculum for the third level of the Satsang Examinations, Satsang Parichay, conducted by the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha.

It is our earnest prayer that all devotees, young and old, will study this book carefully and pass the examinations with flying colours and, above all, derive immense spiritual benefit and earn the blessings of our guru, His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

- Swaminarayan Aksharpith



Ame sau Swāminā bālak, marishu Swāmine māte;
Ame sau Shrijitanā yuvak, ladishu Shrijine māte...
Nathi dartā nathi kartā, amārā jānni parvā;
Amāre dar nathi koino, ame janmyā chhie marvā...ame 1
Ame ā yagna ārambhyo, balidāno ame daishu;
Amārā Akshar Purushottam, Gunātit jnānne gāishu...ame 2
Ame sau Shriji tanā putro, Akshare vās amāro chhe;
Svadharmi bhasma choli to, amāre kshobh shāno chhe...ame 3
Juo sau motinā Swāmi, na rākhi kai te khāmi;
Pragat Purushottam pāmi, malyā Gunātit Swāmi...ame 4

Translation

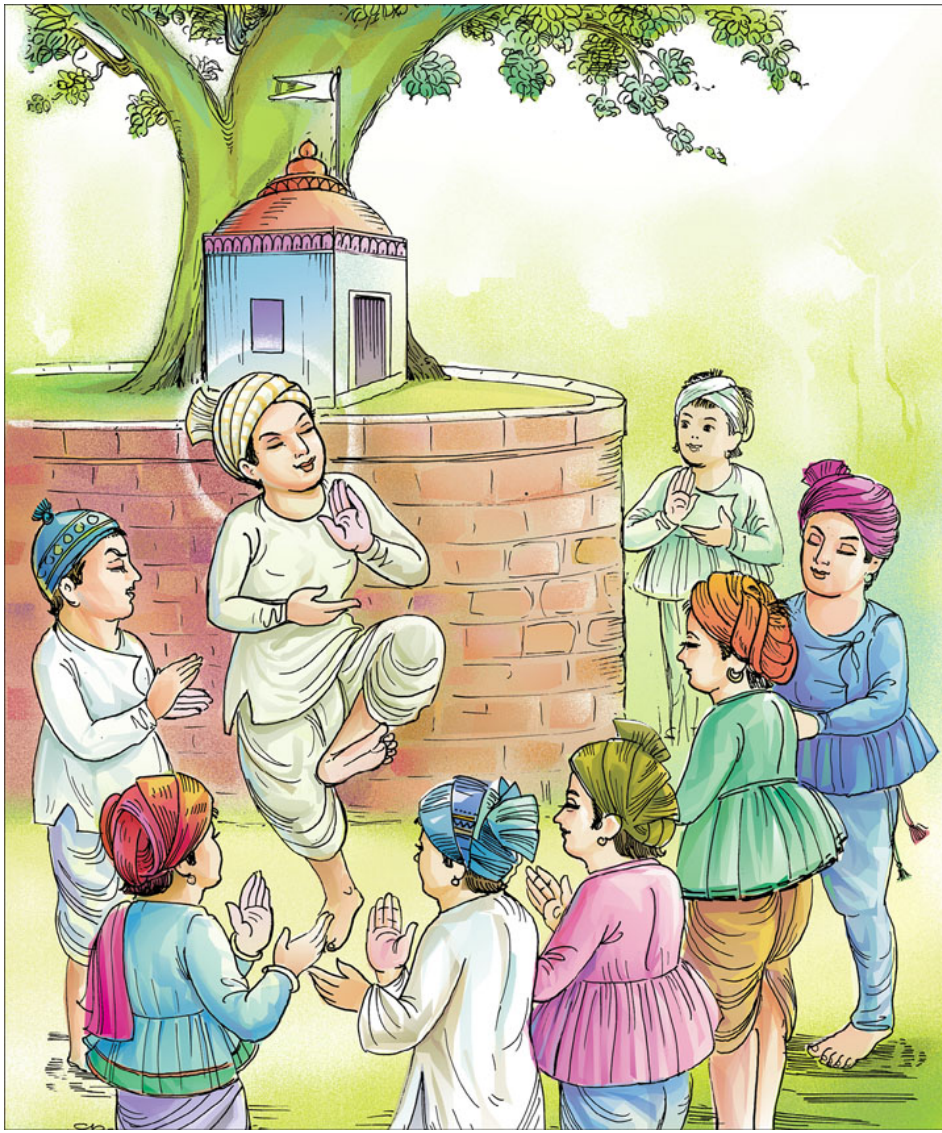
Pledge: Ame Sau Swamina Balak...

We are the children of Swami; we will die for him. We are the youths of Shriji Maharaj; we will fight for him. We are fearless; we will not shirk sacrificing our lives, for we are born to die. We have launched this movement and will undergo any suffering. We will sing the praises of Akshar-Purushottam.

We are the sons of Shriji Maharaj; we have our abode in Akshar. Consecrated as we are to *swadharma* (religious faith), we have no apprehension whatsoever. Lord Purushottam and Akshar, Gunatitanand Swami, are with us. We have accomplished our

goal.

1. Early Childhood



Pragji Bhakta leads his friends in singing devotional songs by the shrine of Hanumanji

A group of children was chanting the Ramdhun in the mandir courtyard. In the middle a handsome little boy was dancing while singing devotional songs. All those visiting the mandir to offer their prayers were deeply impressed by the child's ardent love towards God. They forgot everything else and stood there like statues watching this little boy dancing and singing in praise of God. When the children stopped singing,

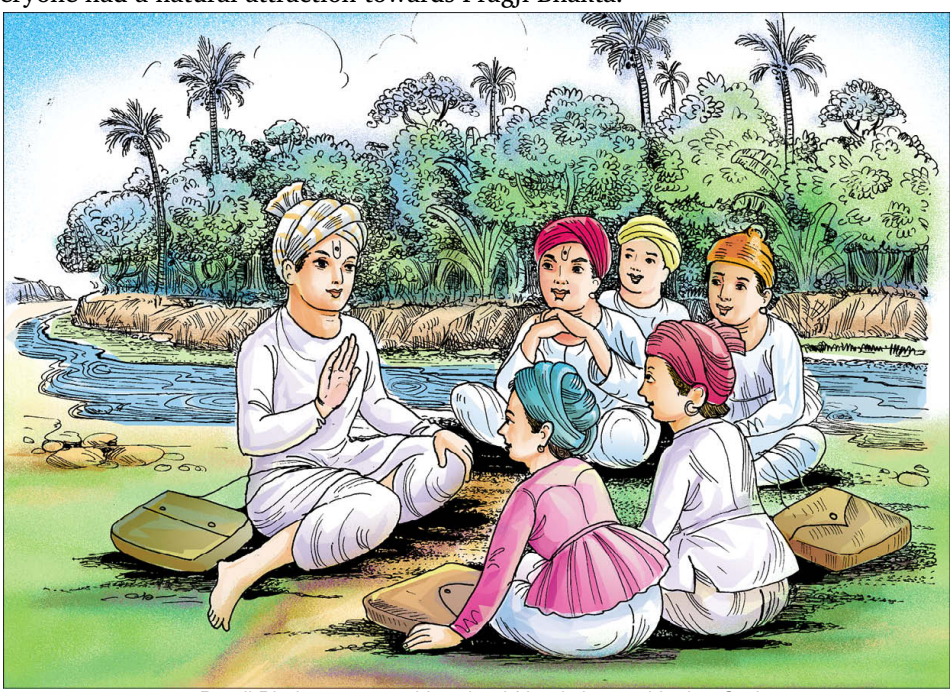
the people discovered that the leader of the group was Pragji, known as Bhagat, the son of Govindbhai of Mahuva.

Pragji Bhakta regularly visited this Lakshmi-Narayan mandir with his friends. It was here in front of the small shrine of Hanumanji under the pipal tree, that Shriji Maharaj had stayed for three days when He was travelling as Nilkanth Varni. The child Pragji Bhakta always served the *murti* of Hanumanji.

Mahant Suryabharathi was greatly pleased with the devotion of the child. Pragji Bhakta served the *mahant* and attentively listened to the story of Shri Ram and pondered over the high ideals exemplified by the great characters of the Ramayan.

In the luscious green seaside town of Mahuva in Saurashtra, this child devotee was born to a tailor family on the full moon day of the bright half of Fagan in V.S. 1885 (1829 CE). The child was very beautiful and luminous and was loved by all.

The child devotee was sent to the local school, but he was too active to remain within the walls of the school. Often, he would run away with other schoolboys to the river Malan that flowed along the outskirts of Mahuva. He would sit in the dry areas of the riverbed and talk to his friends, "I have studied everything. I have come to worship God and make others worship God." Young children always stayed in his company and everyone had a natural attraction towards Pragji Bhakta.



Pragji Bhakta engages his school friends in worshipping God

Once, a festival dinner was arranged at Pragji's house. Pragji Bhakta went to his mother and said, "Mother, I am terribly hungry. Please give me something to eat." However, his mother refused to give any food as she had not yet sanctified the food by offering it to God. But, when she went out to do some work, Pragji Bhakta entered the kitchen and ate all the sweets, weighing 3½ kg. Then he climbed up into the loft and

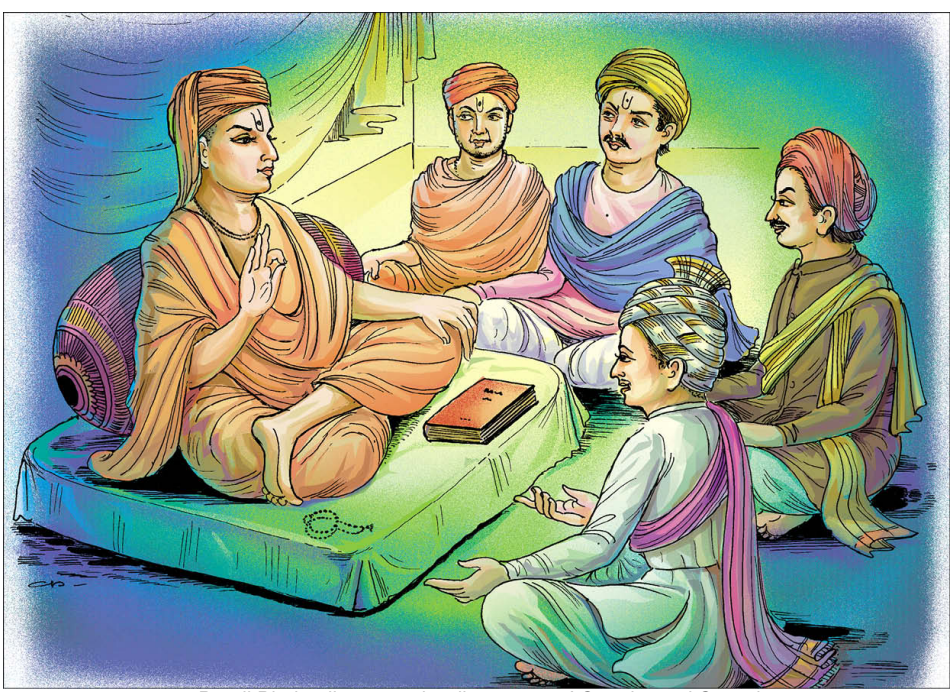
slept.

On returning, his mother was shocked to see the sweets missing. She asked everyone in the house about them. She thought that perhaps some stray dog might have eaten the sweets. But, then, Pragji Bhakta called out from the loft, “l have eaten all the sweets.” His elder brother chased him, but Pragji Bhakta jumped onto the veranda and escaped.

The story of this feat of little Pragji Bhakta quickly spread throughout the entire town. Everyone exclaimed, “He is a miraculous boy!”

Once, a great sadhu, Sadguru Yoganand Swami, came to the Swaminarayan Mandir in Mahuva. Pragji Bhakta, who loved to serve sadhus, met this holy man. He experienced inner peace by the darshan of Swami. Pragji Bhakta accepted the *vartman* from him and became a *satsangi*. Now, Pragji Bhakta spent most of his time in the mandir in the service of the sadhus. Once, he sold a precious lace of his mother’s sari to feed the sadhus. Yoganand Swami, who was deeply impressed by the zeal, devotion and love of this child observed, “He will be a great devotee.”

2. Meeting Sadguru Gopalanand Swami



Pragji Bhakta listens to the discourses of Gopalanand Swami

It was during this period that Acharya Shri Raghuvirji Maharaj and Sadguru Gopalanand Swami visited the village of Pithvadi near Mahuva. The Rathods of Pithvadi had especially invited Pragji Bhakta from Mahuva to perform *pujan* of

Acharya Maharaj and Swami. A huge assembly of sadhus and devotees was organised as per the tradition of Satsang. The ten-year-old Pragji Bhakta had put on beautiful clothes for the occasion. He boldly stood before the congregation and performed the *pujan* of Acharya Maharaj and the sadhus, performed *arti* and then prostrated before them.

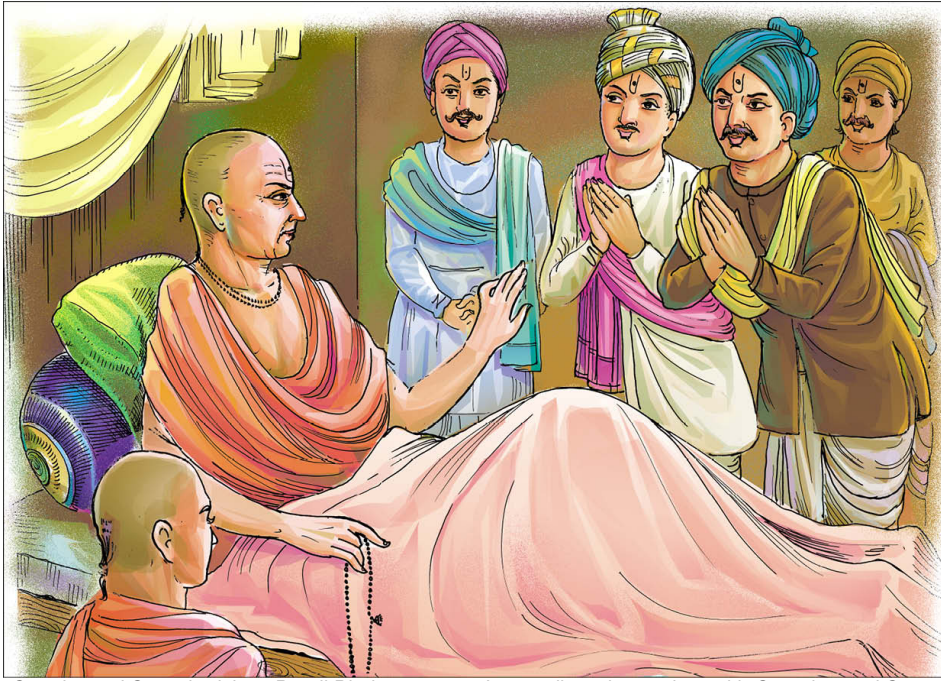
The child caught the attention of Acharya Maharaj. Devotees introduced the child devotee. Sadguru Gopalanand Swami, who had been observing the child since he came to the congregation, said, “This child is a born devotee.” The devotees asked Swami to say more. Swami replied, “He is very great and will inspire thousands of people to worship God.” These words of Swamiji made the child all the more loved by the people.

Pragji Bhakta was instinctively attracted towards the luminous figure of Sadguru Gopalanand Swami. From then on he regularly visited Vartal to stay in the company of Gopalanand Swami. He was always accompanied by the elderly Jinabhai Rathod of Mahuva, whom he served during their journey. At Vartal he always sat by Gopalanand Swami’s side and ate only simple food, like, gram and jaggery. He served Gopalanand Swami with great devotion and listened to his discourses with great faith.

Pragji Bhakta’s love and devotion towards Gopalanand Swami became deeper and more intense. He longed for more and more *satsang*. He desired to stay in the service of Swami all the time. One day he asked Swami about this. Swami told him, “One who accepts Shriji Maharaj as the incarnation of all incarnations and becomes attached to Gunatitanand Swami, remains constantly in communion with Shriji Maharaj and me – whether such a devotee is a renunciant or a householder.”

This made Pragji Bhakta aware of the greatness and eminence of Gunatitanand Swami, the choicest devotee of Shriji Maharaj. But Pragji Bhakta was too deeply attached to Gopalanand Swami to ponder over this revelation.

Out of his deep love and reverence towards Swami he thought of renouncing the worldly life. But Swami commanded him to worship God while remaining as a householder. Once Pragji Bhakta went to Mumbai to learn the craft of tailoring. Then, he prepared a beautiful coat and a pair of stockings for Acharya Maharaj and went to Vartal to offer them to Acharya Maharaj, who was greatly pleased by this.



Gopalanand Swami advises Pragji Bhakta to go to Junagadh and associate with Gunatitanand Swami

As he had great attachment for Gopalanand Swami, Pragji Bhakta often became sad when, in the course of his work, he forgot him. Seeing this, Gunatitanand Swami used to tell him, "If you attain *jnan* from the sadhus, then even while leading the life of a householder you will not be able to forget God and His holy Sadhu."

Overwhelmed by his love, once, Gopalanand Swami told Pragji Bhakta, "Go to Junagadh. All my promises to you shall be fulfilled there."

In V.S. 1908 (1852 CE) Gopalanand Swami was taken ill at Vartal. The devotees of Vadodara wanted him to spend his last days with them. But Swami promptly replied, "Now my attention is towards Maharaj in Akshardham or towards the Jogi of Junagadh."

Pragji Bhakta requested Swami to explain the significance of his reply. Gopalanand Swami said, "The Jogi of Junagadh is himself the manifestation of Akshardham, the dwelling place of Shriji Maharaj. He is not even an atom's width away from Shriji Maharaj." So saying Gopalanand Swami passed away to Akshardham on the fourth day of the dark half of Vaishakh.

3. With Gunatitanand Swami at Junagadh

As Pragji Bhakta adored Gopalanand Swami very much, he found the pangs of separation unbearable. He felt sad and unhappy and left Vartal and reached Gadhada. Here, Siddhanand Swami consoled him and took him to Junagadh to meet

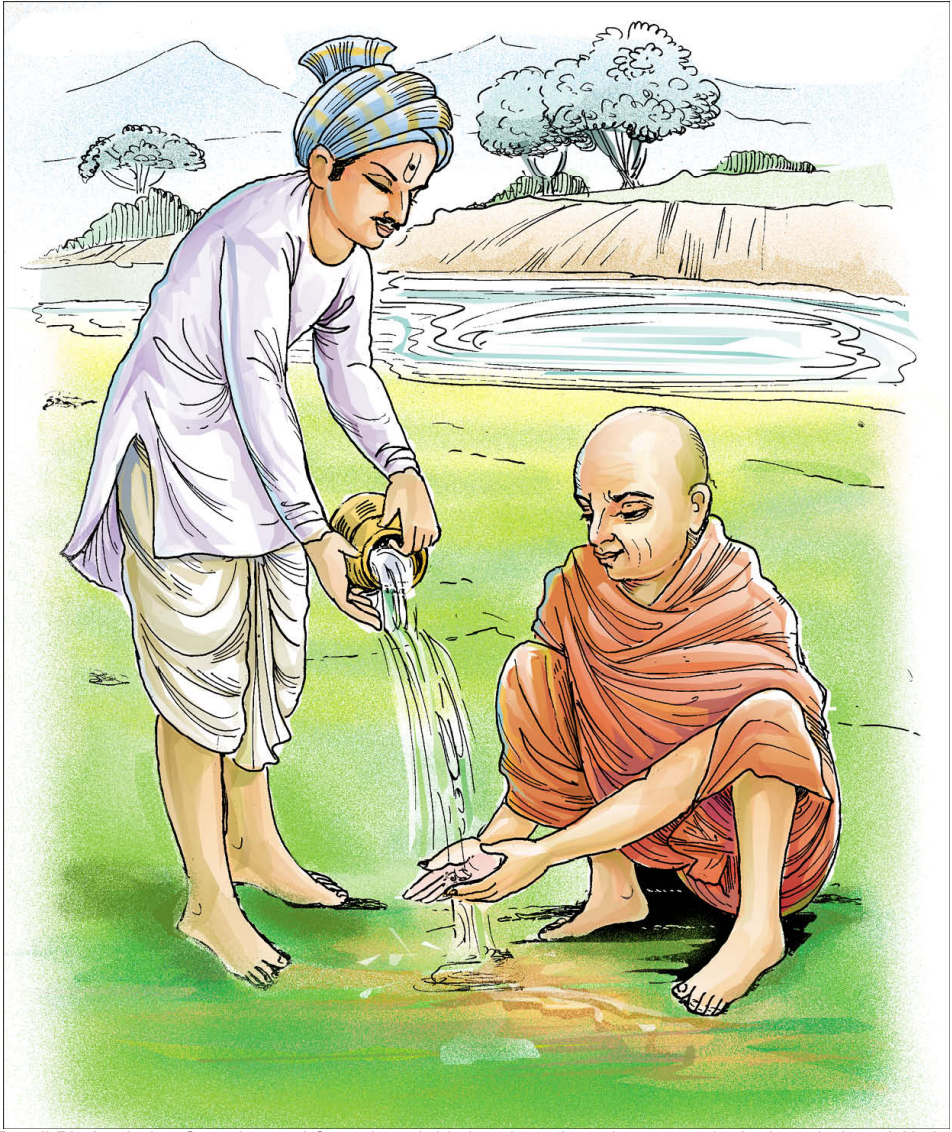
Gunatitanand Swami.

"Where does this forest deer come from?" asked Gunatitanand Swami on seeing Pragji Bhakta. He welcomed Pragji with affection. Pragji Bhakta also experienced inner peace. His mind was pacified in the presence of Gunatitanand Swami and he recalled the advice given by Gopalanand Swami, "Go to Junagadh." He was greatly impressed by the saintliness of Gunatitanand Swami and quickly developed affection for him.

He was won over by the learned discourses of Gunatitanand Swami in which he explained the glory of Shriji Maharaj as Purna Purushottam and the means of becoming *brahmarup*. He felt like staying in the company of Gunatitanand Swami at Junagadh. He would spend eight months every year in the company of Swami.

In V.S. 1911 (1855 CE) Swami gave discourses on *swarupnishtha* and *ekantik dharma* for seven months at Vartal. All the words of Swamiji were recorded in Pragji Bhakta's mind and he would daily repeat them before the learned sadhus and devotees. Besides this he would reveal to them that Gunatitanand Swami was himself the manifestation of Akshar, the heavenly abode of Maharaj.

4. Recipient Worthy of Akshar Jnan



Pragji Bhakta helps Gunatitanand Swami wash his hands and resolves to attain the knowledge of Akshar

Once, as he was unable to reach Vartal for a festival, Pragji Bhakta came to Sarangpur in search of Gunatitanand Swami. At that time Swami was at the nearby village of Khambhda. With great difficulty Pragji reached Khambhda late at night. Swami was very happy to see Pragji Bhakta, because at that very moment he was thinking of him. Under the pretext that he felt hungry, Swami asked one of his attendants to bring a *rotlo*. He took a piece and then gave the rest to Pragji Bhakta.

Early next morning, Swami set off for Sarangpur. At Narayankund, on the outskirts of Sarangpur, Swami got down from his cart to answer a call of nature and perform ablutions. Pragji Bhakta was pouring water to help Swami wash his hands when Swami told him his inner thought, “Pragji, I am overflowing with *jnan* but I have yet to find a worthy person to receive it.”

Seeing the mood and love of Swami, Pragji Bhakta showed his readiness, saying, “Swami, will you give that *jnan* to me?”

Swami replied with a smile, “It can only be given to a valiant soul who has total control over all his senses and body and is prepared to surrender himself completely to me.”

Pragji Bhakta took Swami’s words seriously and resolved to be worthy of the Swami’s blessings. Swami also saw in him a worthy disciple and blessed him.

5. Request for Akshar Jnan

During his trips to Mahuva, Pragji Bhakta used to talk to the devotees about the divine supremacy of Shriji Maharaj and that Gunatitanand Swami was the manifestation of Akshar. In V.S. 1916 (1860 CE) when the *murti* of Harikrishna Maharaj was installed at Gadhpur, Pragji Bhakta pleased Acharya Raghuvirji Maharaj by preparing beautiful garments for the *murtis* of Gopinathji Maharaj and Harikrishna Maharaj. In the same year a *murti* of Harikrishna Maharaj was also installed at Junagadh. Then, too, Pragji Bhakta, with the loving assistance of the devotees, prepared elegant garments of gold and silver threads for Thakorji. Swami was greatly pleased with the devotion and practical worldly wisdom of Pragji Bhakta.

Pragji Bhakta had cultivated a habit of working while remembering God. Even a little deviation from this caused him pain. As a devout *sadhak*, he once requested Swami to give some illness to his body as a mark of austerity.

For some time Pragji Bhakta remained ill. During this illness Pragji continuously focussed his mind on Swami. Devotion to Swami became the sole purpose of his life.

The following year Acharya Raghuvirji Maharaj was to be present in the Fuldol festival at Junagadh. Swami asked Pragji Bhakta to prepare an artistic canopy to cover the huge assembly area. Pragji Bhakta, with assistance from the devotees, purchased suitable thick cloth for the purpose and started his work. He worked incessantly day and night to prepare the canopy. Once, Swami came to observe the work in progress. He was so happy to see Pragji Bhakta singing devotional hymns while working. Swami asked Pragji to ask for whatever boon he liked. But Pragji Bhakta had no wants. So Swami gave him a boon, “You will earn lots of money, so associate with the sadhus while leading the life of a householder.”

Pragji Bhakta, however, requested, with folded hands, “I have learnt by associating with you and Gopalanand Swami that there is no happiness in wealth and women. Please bless me with your knowledge, show me your dwelling place and make me a true *satsangi*.”

In order to test him Swami tempted Pragji with material pleasures; but would Pragji Bhakta trade the *chintamani* for them? Seeing that Pragji Bhakta was firm in his determination to reject worldly pleasures Swami said to Pragji, “You can have your three boons if you are prepared to leave home and stay here and dedicate your life for

them."

Swami was convinced of his intense yearning for *jnan* and made the promise. The canopy, which could only have been completed after many days of hard work by many tailors, was prepared by Pragji Bhakta alone within a month. This earned him profuse blessings from Gunatitanand Swami.

6. Do or Die for the Guru

Pragji Bhakta prepares mortar for use in the haveli construction

In accordance with Gunatitanand Swami's wish, Pragji Bhakta left home and went

to Junagadh to serve him. Swami had undertaken the task of constructing a *haveli* on the mandir premises. Pragji Bhakta laboured hard to help dig the foundations. Then, following Swami's wish, Pragji undertook the difficult work of washing the sand and pouring it into the foundation. He completed the task all alone. As he performed each task Gunatitanand Swami expressed his pleasure, which encouraged Pragji Bhakta to work more and more.

Then came the most difficult job of preparing the lime mortar. Everyone was afraid that it would cause blisters on their hands and feet and also make them blind. Nobody came forward to undertake this work. As it was Swami's wish Pragji Bhakta volunteered. He willingly accepted the work and started lifting the large sacks of lime on his back. He mixed water and lime in a pit and pounded it into mortar with his bare feet. With a desire to please Swami, Pragji Bhakta enthusiastically absorbed himself in the work maintaining good feelings towards everyone. If anyone warned him, "Pragji, you will become blind on account of the heat from the lime," he would simply reply, "I want to please Swami. I have dedicated my life in the service of Swami."

Although Pragji Bhakta worked day and night, Gunatitanand Swami once told him, "You are working hard physically, but without austerities your senses will not be tamed." So, on Swami's instructions, he began to fast for two days at a time and eat only once on the third day. He served during the day and in his spare moments he sat near Swami and listened to his spiritual discourses. Even at night, he would be in Swami's company. Sometimes, when instructed by Swami, he would sleep in the *gorakh* posture for an hour or so. But he never slept with his leg extended.

Gunatitanand Swami was greatly pleased with this deep devotion and service of Pragji Bhakta. Often, Swami would explain to him the teachings of Shriji Maharaj from the Vachanamrut. He also taught him the intricate *yogic* methods. Pragji Bhakta had only one aim – to act according to the wishes of Swami and to obey all his commands.

At times Swami used to test him. Once, Swami told him, "Pragji, mortar is to be prepared. Fetch two hundred spades and five hundred buckets." Pragji searched the mandir and returned with a few spades and buckets. But he did not argue with Swami that there were not so many implements available in the mandir. He knew that Gunatitanand Swami was the all-knower. Therefore, it was his duty to act according to Swami's wish, keeping firm faith in him.

On another occasion Swami issued an unexpected command, "Pragji, go and call Mount Girnar. The poor fellow has been performing austerities for ages. I want to redeem him." Pragji rushed to call Girnar. Some people criticised Pragji for not using discretion. They remarked, "Do you really expect Girnar to come? You should use discretion in carrying out commands."

Pragji Bhakta replied, "Except for those commands which are against the tenets of religion, it is the duty of a disciple to carry out all the commands of his guru without any hesitation. I will go to Girnar and call him. Whether he wants to come or not is upto him." Such was his firm faith in Swami.

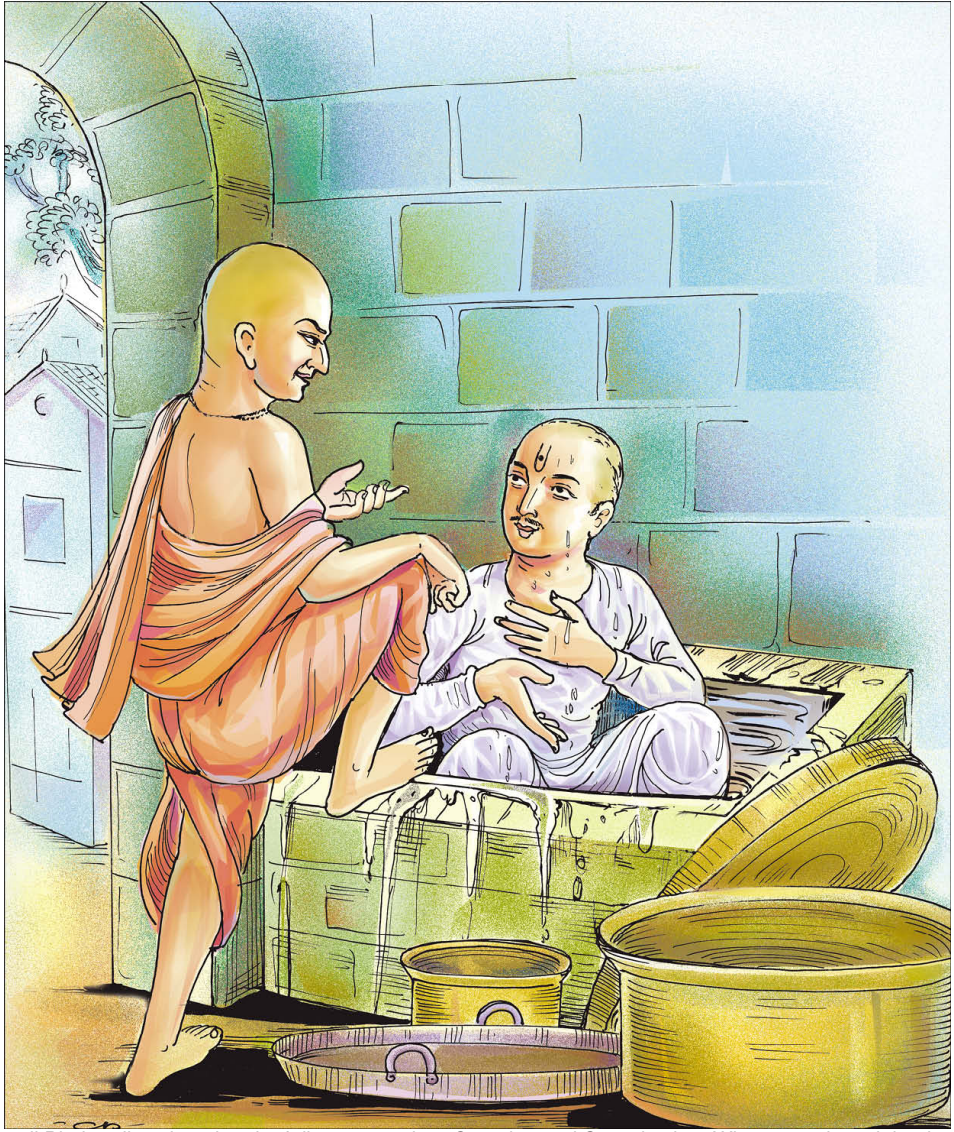
Pragji worked hard for three consecutive days to prepare the furnace and then for three days he worked to fill it with lime. Swami became so happy that he embraced

Pragji several times and touched his head to bless him. Tears of joy rolled down the cheeks of Pragji Bhakta. He thought, “What a great fortune that Gunatitanand Swami himself is embracing me and bestowing upon me his divine love!”

His inner self was in constant communion with Swami. Even a very minor incident revealed this fact to all. Once, Swami went with some sadhus and devotees to the meadows of Sankhdavadar, near Junagadh, to cut grass. All of a sudden it started raining heavily. Pragji Bhakta sewed two sheets, made an improvised umbrella and sheltered Swami. Swami was very pleased and said, “*Kalyan* lies in three things, *atmabuddhi*, *anuvrutti* and *seva* towards the great Sadhu.”

A barber named Karsan used to shave the sadhus at Junagadh mandir every month. He increased his rates by one paise per person. Gunatitanand Swami refused to pay him the increased rates. But soon the sadhus felt uncomfortable without the monthly shave and tonsure. Swami asked Pragji Bhakta to do the barber’s job. He was always eager to obey his guru. He bought the necessary instruments from the market and served Swami first. Then, for nearly six months he performed the role of a barber without feeling belittled by what he was doing. He also served as a torch-bearer, which also was the job of the barber. Swami deeply loved him and always offered him food from his own wooden eating bowl.

7. Sixty-Eight Places of Pilgrimage at Thy Feet



Pragji Bhakta dives into the pit of dirty water when Gunatitanand Swami asks, "Where are sixty-eight places of pilgrimage?"

To please Swami, Pragji Bhakta served as barber, tailor, stone-mason, carpenter, blacksmith and a wood-cutter. There used to be continuous reading of the scriptures in the presence of Swami. Pragji Bhakta was responsible for reading the last recitation at night. He served Swami till late in the night. He helped him to sleep by massaging his legs. Even in the middle of the night if Swami got up to answer a call of nature, Pragji would hold the lamp to help Swami wash his hands and escort him back to his bed. Although he remembered his guru in his heart incessantly, he always longed to serve him in person.

Though he was a *mahant* of the mandir, Gunatitanand Swami did not spare himself from certain manual work in the mandir. This did not allow him to devote much time

to delivering discourses. He felt sorry that he could not concentrate much on preaching. Pragji Bhakta realized Swami's difficulty and said humbly, "I will do your manual work in the mandir. You sit in the assembly and deliver spiritual discourses."

When Gunatitanand Swami heard this, he was pleased and told him, "You are already busy and engaged for twenty-three hours. How will you be able to find time to do my work?" However, Pragji Bhakta did not bother about himself because of his love and devotion towards Swami.

During this period the construction work of the *haveli* was in progress. Some slabs of stone were lying outside the mandir. And a dead dog lay on top of the slabs. Everybody thought that a scavenger would come and remove the dead dog. Meanwhile, Swami asked Pragji, "Why has the supply of stones from outside stopped?" He went and saw the dead dog lying on the stones. He thought that he should remove the dead dog because Swami had asked him, only then would the work continue. He changed his clothes and removed the dead dog. Then he took a bath and returned to the mandir.

The work began. Gunatitanand Swami was greatly pleased. Some people made faces, while others criticised Pragji for acting as a scavenger. On hearing this, Swami observed, "Every living being is, in a sense, a scavenger. What wrong has been committed by Pragji in helping the work restart by removing the dog? After all, he has acted according to my wishes."

Once, after the *annakut* festival, Pragji was washing the vessels. There was a pit in which dirty water was collected. Swami came there and put his foot on the edge of the pit. The dirty water touched his toes. Instantly Swami asked, "Pragji, where can one find all the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage?"

Pragji Bhakta understood the deeper meaning of the Swami's words and immediately jumped into the pit of dirty water. It was a spiritual bath for him. He knew that the dirty water in which Swami had dipped his toes contained all the sixty-eight holy places. For a while Swami just kept watching. Then he said, "Pragji, come out and wash yourself with clean water." Such was the intense devotion of Pragji Bhakta!

Once Mana Bhagat said to Swami, "This poor Pragji has left everything to learn meditation from you. But instead, you make him lift big stones. You are extracting work beyond his capacity." Mana Bhagat failed to see the divine flame that burnt in Pragji Bhakta's heart. Swami replied, "I will make him lift stones and realize God." Mana Bhagat became silent after hearing Swami.

8. Art of Saintliness

Pragji Bhakta waters the mango trees at Maliya

Once on his way to the meadows of Sankhdavadar, Swami stopped at Maliya village. He stopped for rest in a mango grove of the mandir. He saw the mango trees and remarked, “They will wither away for want of water.” As soon as Pragji Bhakta heard Swami’s remark, he collected two pots and started fetching water from the nearby river to water the trees. There were some three hundred mango trees and Pragji gave each tree four pots of water. He was drenched to the skin with water and sweat. Then he went to Swami with water dripping from his clothes.

Swami was nearing the end of his discourse. He wanted to make everybody understand that he could be pleased by devout service. Pleased with Pragji’s devout service Swami said, “Pragji! Ask a question.”

Innocently Pragji Bhakta asked Swami, “I know all the worldly crafts but please

teach me the path to saintliness."

The congregation was stunned by the deep scholarly question which contained the essence of all the scriptures, coming from a simple, ordinary-looking man.

Swami, who was pleased by Pragji's question, replied, "The craft of saintliness is very tough. To look upon insults and honours with equanimity, to bear no ill-will towards anyone, to overcome the pleasures of the five senses, to realize the *atma* and remain constantly in communion with the *murti* of Shriji Maharaj is the craft of sainthood. One who has attained this is never separated from God. Such a devotee becomes capable of helping countless people to overcome their shortcomings and leading them to God."

The entire assembly of devotees was completely absorbed in the divine speech of Swami. Manji Thakkar and Nathu Patel told Swami, "Swami, you have quenched our spiritual thirst."

"Why should I not be pleased with Pragji who has intuitively obeyed me without caring for his own self?" said Swami. From then on, with the blessings of Swami, Pragji always remained engrossed in devotion in all three states of mind – waking, deep sleep and dream.

9. Bananas on a Cactus

Once, while talking to Abhesinh Bapu of Ganod, Swami said, "Darbar, you must have seen bananas growing on a banana tree, but here we find bananas growing on a cactus. That boy, who is pounding mortar, is the son of an ordinary tailor but he has attained the *yoga* which even the *yogis* find difficult to attain. He remains engrossed in devotion exercising complete control over his mind and senses in all the three states."

The Darbar was aware of Pragji Bhakta's devotion for Swami. He said, "You have rewarded his service."

"He is yet to be rewarded. He is an eternal devotee. Others would not have been able to serve like this," said Swami, explaining the greatness of Pragji Bhakta to the Darbar.

During the Hutashani (Holi) festival assembly Swami talked to the thousands of sadhus and devotees about the divine teachings of Shriji Maharaj and the need for associating with the holy Sadhu. Then he gave the *fagva prasad* of grams, popcorn and dates to everyone. Swami did not see Pragji Bhakta there, so he sent for him. When Pragji came, Swami offered him what was left – the unpoped popcorn kernels. Pragji Bhakta became very very happy to receive the *prasad*. Manji Thakkar, who was present at that time, thought to himself that Swami is ready to bestow everything upon him, but instead of asking for sanctified hair, nails and other items of value, he is pleased with the leftover *prasad*. In order to make other people realize how precious the *prasad* received from Gunatitanand Swami's own hands was, Pragji Bhakta approached Swami and said, "Swami, is this *prasad* a token of your divine favour?"

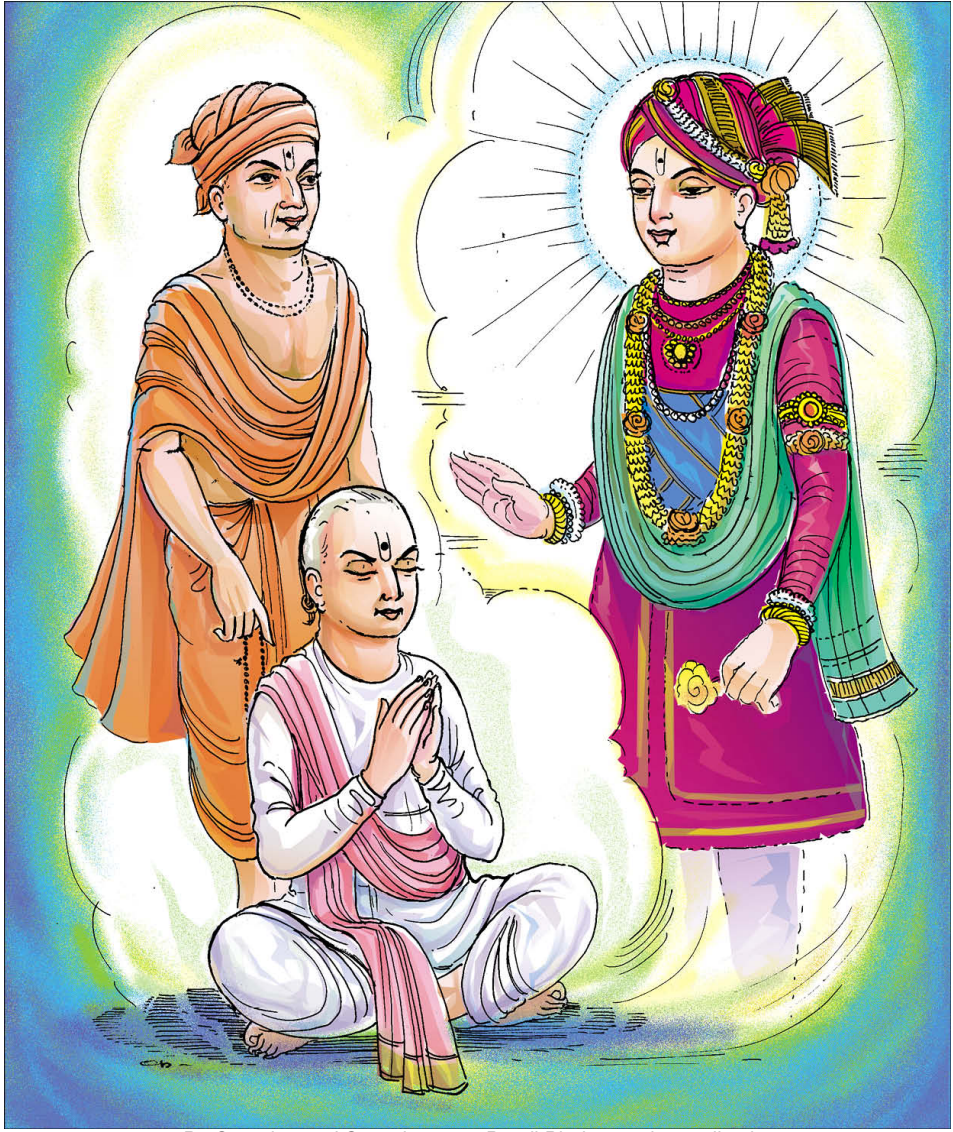
“Yes, I am pleased with you,” said Gunatitanand Swami.

While putting one kernel in his mouth Pragji Bhakta asked, “Swami, have I overcome lust?”

Swami said, “Yes, indeed.” Then, one after another, he put the unpopped kernels in his mouth and asked “Swami, am I purged of all flaws?”

Swami smiled and said, “Yes, they have been reduced to ashes.” Then Swami continued, “From half a sesame seed sanctified by Vitthalnathaji, eighty-four Vaishnavs arose, but this is *mahaprasad*. Pragji is pure at heart and has full knowledge of the glory of those who associate with the great Sadhu.”

10. Realization



By Gunatitanand Swami's grace Pragji Bhakta attains realization

Gunatitanand Swami bestowed much divine grace upon Pragji Bhakta, who had selflessly served Swami, through mind and body, with deep devotion and love for three-and-a-half years. Now Swami wanted him to experience the divinity of God. He asked Pragji Bhakta to sit in meditation in a secluded place. At the end of the ninth day of meditation Swami asked him, "Do you see anything?"

During the meditation he continuously had the darshan of Swami's *murti*. Swami asked him to remain attentive. On the tenth evening of his meditation, he saw an intense light in which he had the darshan of the graceful divine *murti* of Shriji Maharaj. He was dressed in saffron robes. Pragji Bhakta's joy at the sight of the divine figure of Shriji Maharaj was boundless. Tears overflowed from his eyes. He enjoyed this darshan.

Pragji Bhakta was completely overwhelmed by this divine experience. He offered his prayers and said to Maharaj, “O Master! O Maharaj! You have made me fulfilled. I do not deserve this, yet you have graced me with your divine darshan.”

Shriji Maharaj smiled and said, “Swami has earned you this merit.” Then He disappeared. But now Pragji Bhakta began to see Maharaj’s divine *murti* continuously in his heart.

Just then Gunatitanand Swami arrived. Pragji Bhakta fell at his feet. He was overwhelmed by what he had seen. He asked Swami, “Shriji Maharaj gave His divine darshan, but why had He worn saffron clothes?”

Swami said, “He gave darshan in the form of a sadhu, but now see!”

So saying, Swami looked at him and Pragji Bhakta had the darshan of the divine and graceful *murti* of Shriji Maharaj in Akshardham, dressed in glittering garments and ornaments.

Shriji Maharaj graced him and said, “I am under the loving command of Swami and you have won Swami’s heart. Therefore, I am now at your command, too.”

Pragji Bhakta’s joy knew no bounds. His heart danced with joy. Now he was impatient to reveal Swami’s greatness to the people.

Thus, Swami fulfilled the promise which he had given to Pragji three years previously.

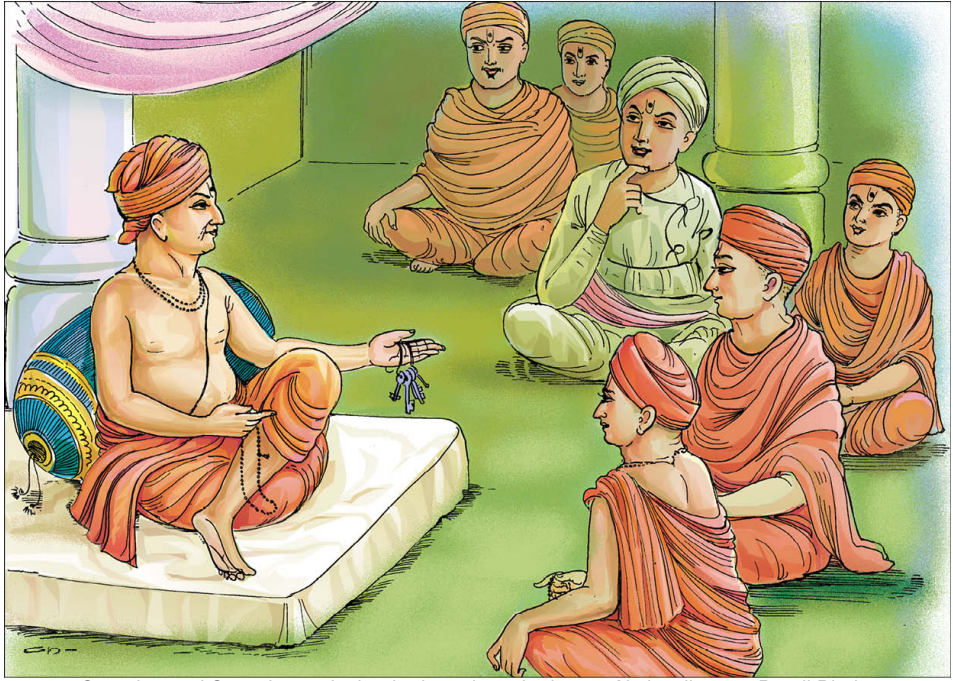
Pragji Bhakta’s moulding into a divine receptacle was complete. He was filled with divine nectar. Now Swami exhibited his divine power and grace through Pragji Bhakta. He observed, “This Pragji does so much service and continuously offers devotion that people will make him their guru, even though he does not desire so.”

Thus Swami appointed Pragji as the guru of all his devotees. He instructed Pragji Bhakta to preach to and purify all the devotees. Also, Swami commanded Pragji to reveal the true form of Mul Akshar in Satsang, and to make people fearless by giving a divine assurance that they will experience divine bliss if they worship Shriji Maharaj.

By his contact with the *paras,* Pragji himself had now become a *paras*. Now he had no fear. He started telling people, “Gunatitanand Swami is the manifestation of Mul Akshar, the divine abode of Shriji Maharaj.” He intuitively knew the desires of the devotees and brought them to Swami for atonement and purification. Word went round the entire Satsang that Swami fulfills all the wishes of Pragji Bhakta.

Pragji Bhakta’s father left his mortal body and was blessed with Akshardham. Pragji Bhakta was reluctant to go to Mahuva, but Gunatitanand Swami told him to pay a visit. It was his first visit to Mahuva for four years. There, he stayed in the mandir and talked to the devotees about the great ness and divine power of Gunatitanand Swami.

11. Key to Akshardham Lies with Pragji



Gunatitanand Swami reveals that he has given the key to Akshardham to Pragji Bhakta

In accordance with the wishes of Gunatitanand Swami, Pragji Bhakta used to discourse on the Swaminarayan philosophy to the devotees. Thus, through him, devotees of Sorath realized Swami as the manifestation of Akshar. During festivals, as commanded by Swami, Pragji Bhakta would sit under the canopy in the assembly hall at Junagadh and deliver discourses. Swami used to tell the devotees who came for darshan, "Now I have retired. If you want to listen to religious discourses go to Pragji." Thus, Swami would direct the devotees to Pragji Bhakta. The devotees experienced great peace by his talks.

Once, Amaidas Kothari, Bechar Bhagat Kothari and some five to seven *parshads* came there from Vartal to listen to Swami's discourses and to visit some pilgrim places. Swami spent a great deal of time talking to them and said, "Kothari, I have retired and handed over all the keys to Pragji Bhakta."

Amaidas was shocked to hear this. He suspected that perhaps Swami had handed over the mandir keys to Pragji. Gunatitanand Swami instantly read his mind and said, "Amaidas, do not worry. The keys of the mandir are here with me, but I have handed over the key to Akshardham to Pragji."

This story spread to Vartal. People started saying, "Pragji has become the main at Junagadh and Swami has merged his personality into Pragji and is at his command. All the devotees from Saurashtra offer *dandvat pranam* to Pragji Bhakta first and then they go to Swami. Also Pragji glorifies Swami too much."

Once, some Darbars asked Swami, "Swami, instead of giving all your spiritual powers to some Brahmin, sadhu or scholar, why have you given it to this tailor?"

Swami smiled and replied, "I was reluctant to give it to him. But he overpowered

me by his selfless, sincere service, love and devotion. In fact, I could not help giving it to him."

"Then withdraw it," said the Darbars.

Swami retorted sternly, "It is not possible to withdraw it because its foundation run deep down."

Then to substantiate his argument, Swami referred to an episode from the Upanishads. He told them, "Vaishampayan Rishi had taught his knowledge to Yagnavalkya. Then, once, the Rishi ordered Yagnavalkya to go to the palace of a king who had no issue. But Yagnavalkya knew that it was not proper for a man who had taken a vow of celibacy to do so. So he politely refused to carry out his guru's command. The guru was angered and ordered him to return the knowledge he had learnt. But how can that which has been learnt be returned? I, too, have taught *brahmavidya* to Pragji, and it cannot be recalled. And don't you think that one who has given *paravidya*, is capable of making him worthy of receiving it! Besides, God and sadhus do not look at one's caste, creed or *ashram* in society."

The commoners looked upon Pragji Bhakta as one belonging to the lower strata of society, but the devotees saw in him the form of God.

12. Akshar Jnan Proclaimed

Once, while returning from Vartal, Swami arrived at Sarangpur. There, Vagha Khachar (Bapu) told Swami that he frequently has dreams of fighting. Swami asked Vagha Khachar to accompany him to Junagadh. Bapu could not live without an attendant, so Swami asked Pragji Bhakta to serve him. Pragji Bhakta served Vagha Khachar and while serving, he used to explain the greatness of Swami to him. However, Bapu did not like Pragji Bhakta's preaching. So he left him. But he was not able to live without an attendant. Gunatitanand Swami persuaded him to keep Pragji Bhakta in his company. He agreed, but stopped listening to Pragji Bhakta's talks.

Vagha Khachar saw that all the devotees of Swami at Junagadh were cheerful and happy. But he was wondering why he did not experience that joy. Once, he talked to Dama Sheth of Mahuva about it. Dama Sheth told him, "Keep faith in Pragji Bhakta and accept Swami as Mul Akshar." Vagha Khachar said, "I will believe this only if Swami tells me in person." So, Pragji Bhakta meditated on Swami, who was talking to a congregation, and drew him to the garden where they were.

Pragji Bhakta said to Swami, "This Vagha Bapu wants to ask you a question."

Swami said, "What Pragji is telling you is the truth." Vagha Khachar asked directly, "Swami, are you yourself Akshar?" Swami smiled and said, "Yes." Vagha Khachar experienced divine peace and his drawbacks were overcome.

Pragji Bhakta had to face many obstacles and insults while spreading the glory of Swami as the manifestation of Aksharbrahman. But how could he resist himself from sharing with others the joy of realising the manifest form of Aksharbrahman?

Once, Swami asked Balmukunddasji to call Pragji Bhakta, who was fast asleep. Balmukunddasji called him thrice, “Wake up, Pragji Bhakta. Swami is calling you.” But Pragji did not wake up. So, he returned to Swami and said, “Pragji Bhakta is fast asleep. I called him by his name but he did not wake up. Swami smiled and told him to go back and say, “Gunatit, please wake up.”

Balmukunddasji again went to Pragji Bhakta and called out, “Gunatit, please wake up.” Immediately Pragji Bhakta woke up and came to Swami. Swami said, “Pragji is dead. He has become Gunatit.” Thus, he explained the greatness of Pragji Bhakta to all.

Once, Pragji Bhakta explained the divine greatness of Swami to Kama Sheth of Una. The Sheth lost his temper and slapped him. That night Maharaj appeared to Kama Sheth in a dream and ordered, “Ask forgiveness from Pragji Bhakta.” In the morning the Sheth went to the assembly and, prostrating before Pragji Bhakta, he begged for forgiveness. He bowed before him and presented a dhoti to him.

As instructed by Swami, Pragji Bhakta discoursed to the devotees and prescribed atonements to purify them. Once, Pragji Bhakta asked Swami, “At present you burn the sins of the devotees and purify them. But what will happen when you are not here any more.” Swami replied, “Maharaj is always at your command and by your guidance they will become pure.”

Once, Pragji Bhakta talked about the divine greatness of Swami to Kothari Trikamdas of Junagadh mandir. He did not like it and angrily told Pragji Bhakta, “If you talk like this then someone will beat you up”.

Swami came to know about this. He led Trikamdas to the office and said, “Do you want to see the divine radiance?” So saying he gave him a glimpse of his original divine form. The entire room became filled with the divine radiance. Then that light travelled upto Swami and merged into him. The *kothari* was convinced of Swami’s divine form. Thus, Pragji Bhakta helped innumerable sadhus and devotees realize the original form of Swami and convinced them of the fact that Swami himself was Akshar, the heavenly abode of Shriji Maharaj.

13. The Path of Thorns

With the blessings of Swami, Pragji Bhakta’s powers became known to many. Certain senior sadhus did not like the talks about the glory of Akshar. So, they began to oppose. Acharya Maharaj accompanied by Shuk Swami, Pavitranand Swami and many other learned sadhus had come to participate in a festival at Junagadh.

Pragji Bhakta discoursed to thousands of devotees during this festival and satisfied them. The talks and discourses continued till late at night, near where Pavitranand Swami had kept his seat. Pavitranand Swami lost his temper when he heard Pragji Bhakta talking about the glory of Akshar. Pragji Bhakta went to him and whispered, “There is no alternative except to understand Gunatitanand Swami as the manifestation of Akshar.”

"Who are you to teach me? You are unduly overestimating yourself. I will see to it that you are excommunicated from the Satsang," declared Pavitranand Swami, beating the floor with his stick. Pragji Bhakta replied with a smile, "Swami, now even if Shriji Maharaj wishes He cannot excommunicate me. Iron transformed by a *paras* into gold cannot be converted back into iron even by a *paras*."

While this exchange of words was going on, Gunatitanand Swami came there. He made Pragji Bhakta tender an apology and appeased Pavitranand Swami. Still, the latter was so angry with Pragji Bhakta that he announced that he did not even want to see Pragji's face. Then, Swami led Pragji Bhakta to his seat.

After the festival was over, Swami set out on a tour of Sorath. He arrived at Upleta. Here the devotees asked him, "Swami, what will happen to us when you will be no more! Who will help us attain *ekantik dharma*? Who will be our support?" Hearing this, Swami narrated an anecdote, "Once a gardener presented some bitter gourds filled with sweet pomegranate seeds. Everyone laughed at the gardener. The king ordered his servants to break the gourds. On breaking them they saw the sweet pomegranate seeds. Everyone was pleased to eat sweet pomegranate seeds. Everyone was wonder struck to find sweet pomegranate seeds in the gourds. In the same manner, I, too, have prepared a man who will hold the reins of *ekantik dharma*. He, too, is as sweet as the pomegranate seeds. But only those people who are humble at heart and who have earned merits over many birth will be able to recognise my divine heir." Thus Swami explained the greatness of Pragji Bhakta.

Once, Swami was on his way to Vanthali from Junagadh. He was travelling by bullock cart. Some devotees were also seated with him. Others were on foot. Swami called a *parshad* and said, "Go and call Pragji. The poor fellow must be feeling tired. Let him sit in the cart." When Pragji Bhakta approached the cart, Swami invited him to travel with him. Pragji said, "The mattress on which Swami is seated is radiating the light of innumerable suns, and so I am unable go near!" Through this incident Swami made the devotees realize Pragji Bhakta's elevated spiritual state.

By associating with Pragji Bhakta the devotees of Mahuva understood the infinite greatness of Swami. Swami gave special bliss to the Mahuva Satsang Mandal. Once, Swami was preparing leaf bowls from *khakhra* leaves in the company of the devotees. Out of sheer curiosity, Fulchand Sheth of Mahuva asked Swami, "Swami, what must Akshardham be doing at this moment?" Swami replied, "Akshardham is preparing leaf bowls from *khakhra* leaves in your company." Thus at times Swami was kind enough to talk about his own form.

14. Discord in the Fellowship

The popularity and importance of Gunatitanand Swami in the Satsang was increasing. Certain sadhus and Acharya Bhagwatprasad Maharaj decided to reprimand Swami and so asked him to see them at Una. When Swami received the message from

Acharya Maharaj, he said,

Bhu ko bhār haru santan hit, karu chhāyā kar doi,
Jo mere Santko rati ek duve, tehi jad dāru me khoi,
Nārad mere Sant se adhik na koi…

(I bear the burden of the earth for the benefit of the Sadhu. I protect him. If somebody harms my Sadhu even a bit, I shall uproot him. Oh Narad, there is none greater than my Sadhu…)

Pragji Bhakta requested Swami to explain the meaning of the couplet. Swami said, "The sadhus from Vartal have resolved to reprimand me. And as you are spreading my glory, they have decided to excommunicate you from the Satsang. But they will not succeed at all in this region. Moreover, I can't tolerate you being insulted in my presence." Pragji Bhakta requested Swami, "Let any trouble come to me. But you should not feel despondent with this world."

On his way to Una, Gunatitanand Swami stopped at Maliya. There he learnt that as Krishnaprasad Maharaj had passed away at Dholera, so Acharya Maharaj and the sadhus had returned to Vartal. Thus the plan of reprimanding Swami at Una did not materialise.

Before leaving for Vartal to participate in the Chaitra Punam festival of V.S. 1922 (1866 CE), Swami remarked, "This time Pragji will face trouble, but I have made his armour so carefully that nothing will harm him." This time when he went to the festival at Vartal, Swami left Pragji Bhakta at Junagadh. He went to Vartal via Gadhada, accompanied by many sadhus and devotees.

On the auspicious day of the Ram Navmi festival, certain sadhus and people, referring to Swami, sarcastically said, "He has become God and is being worshipped." But Swami remained quiet and unruffled. Then Swami said, "Shriji Maharaj is the only God," and talked about the supremacy of Maharaj as Purushottam. Meanwhile Balramdas Shastri rushed to call Acharya Maharaj to the assembly. As soon as Acharya Maharaj arrived everyone became quiet. The beating of drums in the mandir drew them all to participate in the *arti*.

On his way back from the mandir, a gardener garlanded Swami with a garland of roses. With that garland Swami honoured Sadhu Hariswarupdasji who was the attendant of Shukmuni and had insulted Swami in the assembly. With a smile Swami said,

Haldi jardi nav taje, khatras taje na ām,
Gunijan gunku nav taje, avgun na taje gulām.

(Even turmeric does not leave its colour, nor mango its flavour, nor a base man his demerits, how can a great man leave his goodness!)

Hariswarupdas was completely disarmed by the tolerance and saintliness of Swami. All those, including senior *sadgurus*, regretted what they had done and offered an apology. But, at the same time they decided, "Pragji speaks very highly of Swami's greatness, so he must be excommunicated." They conveyed their decision to Swami. Swami went into deep thought and spoke, "I will tell Pragji, so he will not glorify me." But Pavitranand Swami had resolved to excommunicate Pragji Bhakta. So, with the

consent of Acharya Maharaj, letters to that effect were sent to the mandirs of all towns and villages.

While returning to Junagadh, Swami arrived at Mahelav, a village in Kaira district. Here, Swami blessed Dungar Bhagat (Shastriji Maharaj), the fifteen-month-old son of Dhoribhai, "He will become a sadhu and spread the glory of Shriji Maharaj's supreme form. And through spiritual discourses he will promote and expand the Sampraday." Then he visited Sarangpur and Gadhpur before returning to Junagadh.

15. Excommunicated

As soon as the letter excommunicating Pragji Bhakta from the Satsang came to Junagadh, he set off for Mahuva. The *bhandari* had given him some *ladus* for his journey. After travelling for some time he broke his journey to eat a little. As soon as he put a piece of *ladu* in his mouth, he felt a terrible burning sensation in his body. He realized that the sweets contained poison, so he buried them deep in the ground and, with great difficulty reached Mahuva. He was able to digest the poison through *yoga,* but boils developed all over his body. Then Maharaj gave him darshan, touched his whole body with His hand and advised him to take some soup of black beans. With this remedy he was completely cured within a short time.

Then, once, Swami visited Una with Acharya Bhagwatprasadji Maharaj. Pragji Bhakta went there for Swami's darshan. Swami met him in private and consoled him. He pleased him with *prasad* and sent him home.

From Una, after visiting several places, Swami and Acharya Maharaj came to Mahuva. The devotees of Mahuva had arranged a grand reception for them. Pragji Bhakta had reserved special foodstuff for the guests. The foodstuff which was offered by others was not fit for the sadhus. It was getting late. So Swami Pavitranand remarked, "Pragji has been excommunicated but not his rice and pulses. Accept his foodstuff." Thus, the timely assistance from Pragji Bhakta inspired respect for him in the hearts of the devotees.

In the assembly some of the senior devotees of Mahuva asked Acharya Maharaj, "We can understand your excommunicating a person who is unrighteous, but we fail to understand why you should excommunicate such a great devotee like Pragji Bhakta."

The *sadgurus* promised, "We are going to take him back into the Satsang." In the scorching summer heat Pragji Bhakta used to squat in front of the tents of the sadhus and return home only in the evening when the religious discourses were over. Thus, all realized that although Pragji had been excommunicated, his love for Satsang was increasing day by day. Pragji Bhakta had also requested Pavitranand Swami to take him back into the Satsang. During this seven-day stay, Gunatitanand Swami, too, had met Pragji Bhakta in private and had given him much bliss.

Soon after this, Swami was invited to Ahmedabad by Acharya Ayodhyaprasadji Maharaj, who had fallen ill. Swami gave him great comfort. At the insistence of

Ayodhyaprasadji Maharaj, Swami celebrated the Ram Navmi festival at Ahmedabad and talked to the devotees and sadhus about the supremacy of Shriji Maharaj. Acharya Maharaj and other *sadgurus* had also arrived from Vartal. Pragji Bhakta had also come there with a desire for the darshan of Swami and had put up outside the mandir. Occasionally, when Swami went out, Pragji would have his darshan and would tell all, "Look, there goes Akshar." Thus, Pragji Bhakta spread the divine glory of Swami. Swami told the *bhandari* to send food for Pragji Bhakta to eat.

Acharya Ayodhyaprasadji Maharaj of Ahmedabad served Swami sincerely and with full devotion and won his blessings. Then Swami went to Nadiad and from there he went to Vartal. Thousands of devotees welcomed Swami with overflowing love and devotion, performed his *pujan* and offered him dhotis. Swami also graced them with his learned talks on *brahmajnan* and then returned to Junagadh.

16. Manifestation Through Pragji Bhagat

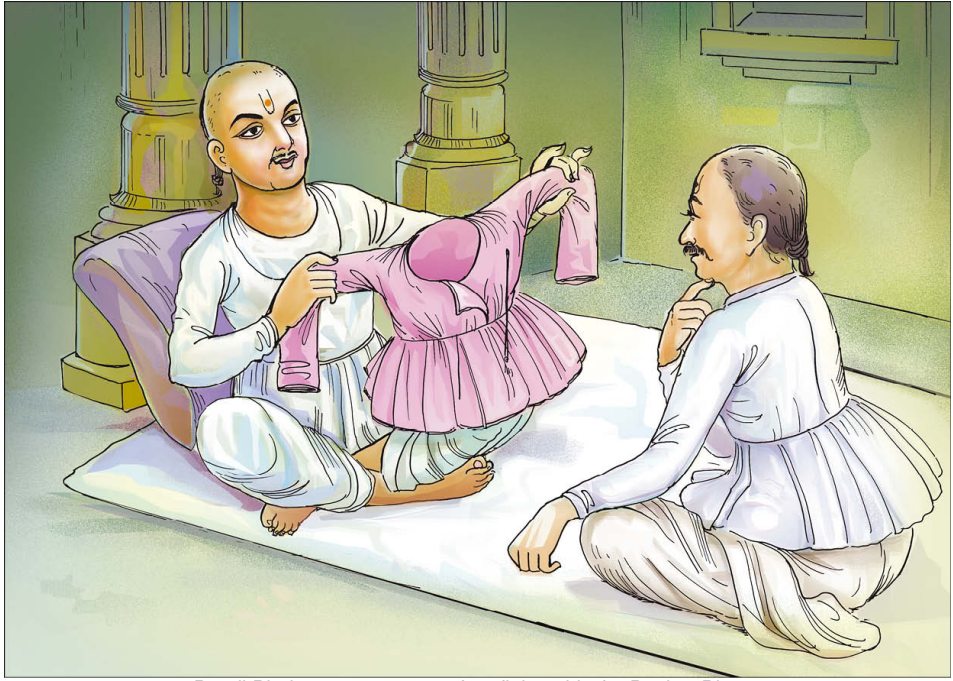
Thousands of devotees had thronged to the Junagadh mandir on the occasion of the Bhim Ekadashi festival. As soon as Swami saw the assembly hall canopy, he remembered Pragji Bhakta. He could not control his tears and said, "For what crime has he been excommunicated. Those who excommunicated him are themselves excommunicated." Such was the deep love Swami had for Pragji Bhakta.

Then he entrusted certain mandir duties to Jaga Bhagat and other trusted devotees and left to tour the region. He came to the gate leading to Nagarwada and sat there for some time. He said, "I have spent forty years, four months and four days in this place. Now I shall move around in Satsang, visiting the devotees and shall stay at Mahuva." Thus he indirectly referred to the fact that he was manifest in the Satsang through Pragji Bhakta.

Gunatitanand Swami left for Vanthali. From there he went to Upleta, Panchala and Gondal. The Maharaja of Gondal had sent a special invitation to him. He was accorded a royal welcome to the palace. He blessed young Bhagwatsinhji and offered him *vartman*.

He visited the homes of Ganod Darbar and Madhavji Karbhari at eleven o'clock at night. Then on Aso *sud* 12 V.S. 1923 (21 October 1867 CE) at 12.45 a.m. he, of his own free will, independently left his mortal body and returned to Akshardham – the divine abode – to serve Shriji Maharaj. The pangs of separation from his divine master was unbearable for Pragji Bhakta. The entire Satsang mourned the death of Gunatitanand Swami and experienced a great spiritual loss.

17. Acceptance in Satsang



Pragji Bhakta prepares a perfect-fitting shirt for Bechar Bhagat

Although he had been excommunicated from the Satsang for nearly three years, Pragji Bhakta had always impressed everyone by his saintliness, *divyabhav* towards all and *ekantik sthiti*. Thus, they all agreed to take him back into the Satsang fold. Due to his divine spiritual qualities everyone fondly called him 'Bhagatji'. Now, Bhagatji (here onwards Pragji Bhagat will be referred as Bhagatji) shifted from Junagadh to Vartal and started accompanying the senior sadhus, Pavitranand Swami, Bhumanand Swami and Shuk Swami on their *vicharan*. Also, in accordance with the wishes of Acharya Maharaj, he delivered religious discourses during festivals and pleased the devotees.

Girdharbhai, a nephew of Kothari Gordhanbhai of Vartal was a genuine aspirant for salvation. With a view to attaining the *brahmic* state in this life, he searched within Satsang for the Satpurush described in the Vachanamrut. He lived in the company of renowned sadhus but none could quench his spiritual thirst. Finally, he returned to Vartal and stood on one leg before the *murti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj and started praying for divine enlightenment. After one month, Maharaj was pleased, gave him darshan and said, "This Pragji Bhakta is my most beloved devotee. I remain manifest in the Satsang through him. Go and seek communion with him and I shall dwell forever in your heart."

Girdharbhai failed to understand the significance of Maharaj's advice. He thought, "How can a tailor, Pragji Bhakta, be the *param ekantik bhakta*? No, he can't be." He once again started praying to Maharaj.

Maharaj again appeared and instructed Girdharbhai to associate with Pragji Bhakta. And so he went to see Bhagatji. His very first meeting with Bhagatji convinced him and he became his disciple. Gordhanbhai arranged for Girdharbhai to be given *bhagwati*

diksha and he was named as Swami Vijnandasji after renunciation.

Kothari Bechar Bhagat assisted Gordhanbhai in his work at Vartal. Once, he asked Bhagatji to stitch a shirt for him. To his surprise, even though Bhagatji had not taken any measurements, the shirt was a perfect fit. Bechar Bhagat was pleased with Bhagatji's skill. Bhagatji said, "This shirt will cover your body but I can prepare a shirt for your soul, too. But, for that you will have to come to my seat." This aroused an air of curiosity in Bechar Bhagat. He went to Bhagatji's seat and sought communion with him. He was greatly impressed by Bhagatji's talks about *atma* and Paramatma. His desire for Bhagatji's company increased and he became his disciple. In this way many pillars of Satsang were drawn towards the *murti* of Bhagatji.

Once, Acharya Maharaj and the sadhus had gone to Anand. Every evening after the *arti* the Swaminarayan *dhun* was chanted. One evening Pavitranand Swami took objection. He said, "Since the time of Maharaj there has been a practice of chanting 'Nar Narayan, Swami Narayan'. Why do you break this?" But the younger sadhus did not listen to him and started arguing with him.

Pavitranand Swami could not tolerate the insult. He returned to Vartal and felt disturbed. So, he sent for Bhagatji and asked him to discourse to him. "In Satsang if one does not overcome ego, jealousy and other base instincts and does not become *atmarup* to offer devotion to God, one is completely exposed. To become *atmarup* one needs unbroken love for a great Sadhu like Mul Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami." Bhagatji narrated many such talks on the basis of the Vachanamrut and gave comfort to the greatly disturbed and agitated mind of Pavitranand Swami. He was now convinced that Bhagatji had become one with Gunatitanand Swami and had attained the *brahmic* state with his blessings. Soon after this, Pavitranand Swami passed away and returned to the abode of God.

Due to some reason Kothari Bechar Bhagat was relieved from his duties by Kothari Gordhanbhai. When Bechar Bhagat went to see Bhagatji, he was rebuked by him for what he had done. Bhagatji talked to him about the greatness of a devotee of God and instructed him to apologise to Gordhanbhai. Bechar Bhagat had great love for Bhagatji, so he shed his false sense of pride and apologised. Then Bhagatji asked Gordhanbhai to use his good offices to arrange for Bechar Bhagat to be initiated by Acharya Maharaj. Bechar Bhagat renounced and was named Swami Mahapurushdas. Now that he was free from all the duties, Mahapurushdas absorbed himself completely in devotion to God.

18. Guru of Shastri Yagnapurushdasji

In the year V.S. 1939 (1873 CE), Bhagatji had gone to Surat to take part in the *murti-pratishtha* ceremony of Shri Ghanshyam Maharaj. While preparing a decorative cloth-sheet for the mandir elephant, Bhagatji discoursed to the devotees. Many sadhus and devotees gathered around his seat to listen to his inspiring talks.

Here, Yagnapurushdasji was staying with Vignananand Swami, serving him and studying the scriptures. He was drawn by the darshan and discourses of Bhagatji and was surprised to find him discoursing while stitching at the same time. Bhagatji said, "A *jnani* has innumerable eyes." Seeing his *brahmic* state, Yagnapurushdasji mentally accepted Bhagatji as his guru.

Also, from Bhagatji, he learnt for the first time that Gunatitanand Swami is Akshar – the heavenly abode of Shriji Maharaj and he is forever in the service of Shriji Maharaj. Hearing this, his guru Vignananand Swami, who had met Maharaj in person, endorsed Bhagatji's views. Yagnapurushdasji was convinced that Shriji Maharaj Himself had revealed this knowledge to the people. He realized the greatness of Bhagatji and became his staunch disciple.

Great sadhus readily identify each other. Bhagatji Maharaj used to say, "He is my beloved son." Such was the affection Bhagatji had for Yagnapurushdas.

Ramratandasji and Yagnapurushdasji were companion sadhus. Once Ramratandasji requested Bhagatji Maharaj to get him the pair of footprints of Shriji Maharaj Yagnapurushdasji had. Yagnapurushdasji acted according to the wishes of Bhagatji and parted with the holy treasure. When Acharya Maharaj came to know about this he became angry and reprimanded Bhagatji. He told Bhagatji that as Yagnapurushdasji was the leader of the group of sadhus, he was required to have the footprints of Shriji Maharaj with him. Bhagatji Maharaj replied instantly, "I will give him the maker of the footprints – Shriji Maharaj!"

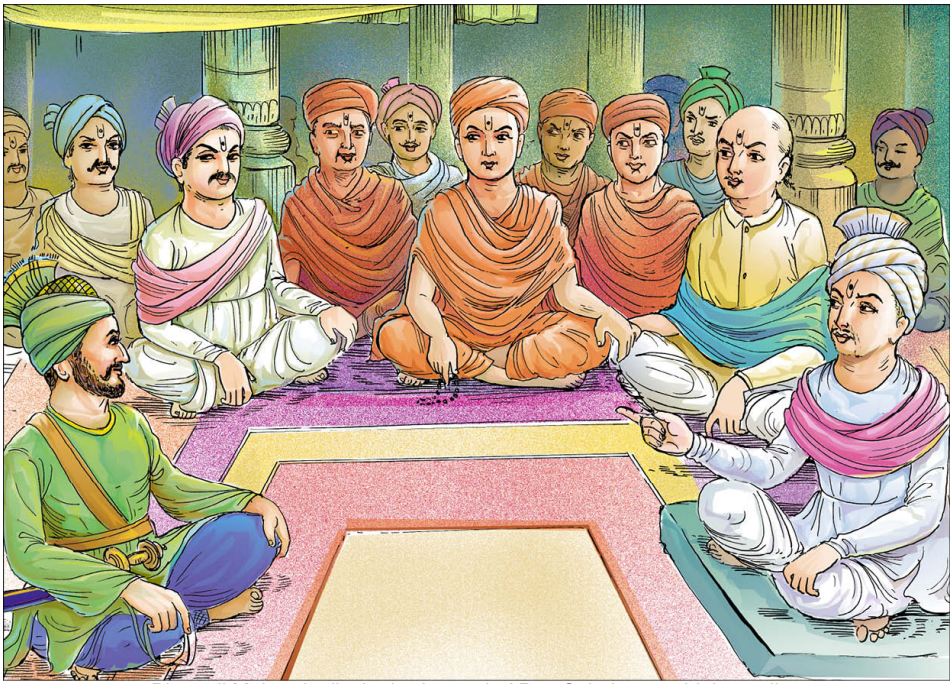
Thus, he revealed his power, as well as his love towards Yagnapurushdasji.

Gradually, all the sadhus – Vignandasji, Yagnapurushdasji, Mahapurushdasji and others – started seeking the divine company of Bhagatji boldly and openly. These sadhus, with their flawless character, earned name and fame as the disciples of Bhagatji all over the Satsang. Also, Bhagatji became increasingly respected throughout the entire Satsang because of his *brahmic* state, and his talks about the supremacy of Shriji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami as the manifestation of Akshar and of becoming *brahmarup*. Acharya Maharaj also loved to listen to his religious discourses. During festivals He especially invited Bhagatji to participate and deliver discourses.

Those sadhus who were deeply attached to Bhagatji spread his glory throughout the Satsang. Certain sadhus could not bear Bhagatji's increasing popularity. Once, they complained to Bhagatji regarding this. Bhagatji sided with them and made the sadhus attached to him apologise.

Once, Bhagatji was going to the mandir in Nadiad. He was accompanied by a Barot devotee. When they were passing through a narrow lane, a *harijan* woman approached them. The devotee lost his temper at the sight of the *harijan* woman and shouted, "Stay away, can't you see we are passing?" Bhagatji did not like this. He felt sorry and told the devotee, "Isn't there God in the heart of this woman?" Thus he taught the lesson of respect towards all.

19. “I Am Possessed by Swaminarayan”



Bhagatji Maharaj tells the bodyguard of Rao Saheb to scold the sadhus

The sadhus who could not tolerate the increasing fame of Bhagatji started protesting. They wanted to put a ban on Bhagatji’s movements in the Satsang. Bhagatji often said, “I am possessed by Swaminarayan.”

Once a sadhu remarked, “Is God a ghost that He possesses you?”

“If a ghost has the power to possess, doesn’t God also?” explained Bhagatji, “God does not possess just anyone. He possesses only those who have immense faith and love for Him.” Then he described the intense loving devotion of the Gopis towards Shri Krishna. He declared, “Due to the blessings of Swami I continually enjoy the divine bliss of Shriji Maharaj’s *murti*. Those who associate with me are granted that everlasting happiness.”

Once, Bhagatji was the guest of Rao Saheb of Petlad. Rao Saheb’s bodyguard was a Muslim. He was a genuine aspirant of God and came to offer his respects to Bhagatji. Bhagatji intuitively read his thoughts and talked to him about the four types of *satpurush* as described in the Koran. The bodyguard experienced divine peace in his presence. Vignandasji and other sadhus were also present. Bhagatji pointed towards the sadhus and said, “Scold these sadhus as they are always pestering me.”

The bodyguard then addressed the sadhus. “You are all fakirs of Khuda and here is Khuda himself. Therefore even if he beats you with a stick or with shoes, you should follow him wherever he leads you.” Hearing this Bhagatji started laughing. In Petlad, Bhagatji blessed the sadhus and devotees with the bliss of his company, *prasad* and

darshan.

When Bhagatji returned to Nadiad after meeting Acharya Maharaj at Surat, he told the sadhus, “This time you will face many difficulties. Remain humble and bear any opposition with patience.”

20. Trouble for Bhagatji’s Sadhus

Bhagatji’s spiritual tours comforted innumerable devotees in Gujarat. Motilalbhai of Pij used to chant *bhajans* incessantly. Once Maharaj appeared in his dreams and said, “I manifest in Satsang through Pragji Bhakta.” He was overjoyed by this darshan. He wrote letters to each and every town about this revelation. Thus, the glory of Bhagatji spread. Certain jealous sadhus could not tolerate this. They managed to get Bhagatji’s disciple-sadhus excommunicated from the Satsang.

Vignandasji, Yagnapurushdasji and many other sadhus arrived at Mahuva during their tour of Gujarat. At first Bhagatji remained indifferent to them, but then he made arrangements for their stay at the Gopnath mandir. He scolded them for glorifying him. The sadhus used to visit the Swaminarayan mandir in turn and seek Bhagatji’s company. By Bhagatji’s grace Yagnapurushdasji and Purani Keshavprasad were permitted to stay with him in the mandir. This gave the sadhus an opportunity to serve Bhagatji throughout the day.

Many devotees came to the mandir to listen to the religious discourses. Once, in the mandir at Mahuva, Yagnapurushdasji told the assembly of devotees and sadhus from Gadhada, citing the Vachanamrut, that Bhagatji was the Param Ekantik Sadhu and described his glory.

One of the devotees, Vitthalbhai, asked, “How did you come to know about these divine qualities of Bhagatji?” Yagnapurushdasji replied, “He belongs to your town and you know him better. Tell me from your experience whether he is a righteous man or not?”

Vitthalbhai replied, “There isn’t a more righteous man than Bhagatji in the entire town. Although he sews clothes for women of Nagar, Bania and other communities, he never entertains any kind of unholy ideas in his mind. On the contrary, he wins them over to the Swaminarayan fold by explaining to them the divine greatness of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.” The sadhus from Gadhada endorsed his views and observed, “We, too, are purified by his company. So, how can there be any impurity in him?”

Yagnapurushdasji said further, “Bhagatji is a *jnani* too. The entire Satsang declares with one voice that there is nobody as *jnani* as Bhagatji. Since, whether he is praised or abused, he remains unruffled by any insults. Again, all the principles described in the Vachanamrut have been attained by him under the divine guidance of Gunatitanand Swami. Therefore, we can say that Bhagatji is a *jnani* in the truest sense of the term.

“His asceticism is also unique. He is a householder, yet he remains above attachments. Whenever he receives any message from Acharya Maharaj he leaves home

immediately. He harbours no worries. If Acharya Maharaj commanded him to renounce, he would renounce this very moment. We have talked about him. But those who seek his company also become detached and overcome all desires. Otherwise, how is it that devotees run to him from distant places, forgetting all their domestic chores and concerns?"

Yagnapurushdasji talked about Bhagatji's great qualities of dharma, *jnan* and *vairagya* and said to the gathering, "Now, you tell me, whether or not he has faith in Shriji Maharaj." Thus he asked the assembly to testify to Bhagatji's qualities of an *ekantik bhakta*.

Vitthalbhai said again, "Bhagatji is a man of firm determination. Even when he was thrown out of Satsang, he continuously worshipped Maharaj. He sat at the mandir gate and sought darshan of sadhus and devotees. He pleased all with his humility. His discourses have helped many people attain true *nishchay* in Maharaj, so there is no doubt about his supreme *nishchay* in Shriji Maharaj. He believes Maharaj as the all-doer and nobody else affects him."

On hearing this, Yagnapurushdasji said, "In this way we can manifestly see all the four qualities of dharma, *jnan*, *vairagya* and *bhakti* in Bhagatji. And Shriji Maharaj, as depicted in Vachanamrut, eternally dwells in him. This is the reason we follow him wherever he goes."

Then, some of the sadhus went to Gujarat as instructed by Bhagatji.

During a festival at Vartal, it was decided by influential sadhus to make Bhagatji's sadhus wear white robes. But the followers of Bhagatji did not agree to their proposal. So the sadhus had to work for Satsang from outside and they all returned to Mahuva.

21. Bliss in Solitude

A large group of devotees and sadhus had come from Gujarat. As advised by Bhagatji, all of them rented a house at Katpur, near Mahuva. Here, Bhagatji also joined the sadhus and lived with them. He blessed the sadhus with his darshan and divine company. The devotees would prepare a variety of dishes everyday to feed the sadhus. Sometimes, Bhagatji himself served the sadhus with great affection. Bhagatji discoursed, while the sadhus sang *kirtans* and everyone enjoyed divine bliss.

Yagnapurushdasji had composed an octet of verses in Sanskrit in praise of Bhagatji. All were greatly pleased to hear it. When the devotees saw the deep devotion of the sadhus towards Bhagatji, they too realized his glory. The excommunication of the sadhus gave them an opportunity of living in the company of Bhagatji. Bhagatji also graced the sadhus by keeping them in his divine company. Thus their excommunication was a blessing in disguise.

Once, in a light mood Bhagatji said, "This Yagnapurushdasji is *mahant* of this *mandal*." He then said to Yagnapurushdas, "You shall obey the commands of Vijnandasji." Thus he commanded the sadhus to work under the commands of

Vignandasji.

Once, Bhagatji told the sadhus, “These saffron clothes are a great obstacle. Therefore go home and practice *satsang*.” However, the sadhus expressed their firm determination of worshipping God, while observing strict celibacy. Bhagatji was greatly pleased to learn of their firm resolve. He blessed them and sent them all to Bhadrod. There they stayed at the mandir of Bhadreshwar Mahadev.

As they could not get the darshan of Bhagatji, the sadhus fasted for three days. On the fourth day Bhagatji arrived there and they all experienced divine peace. He fed them with food and gave them the divine pleasure of his company.

Waking them early in the morning, he would send them to the river to take a bath. Then he would sit them in meditation. He taught them the *yogic* process of continuously concentrating on the *murti* of Maharaj. Then he asked them to observe a fast on alternate days. On the day of fast, he sent them to collect alms in the neighbouring villages. He also sent them to collect cow-dung for fuel. On the day of *parna*, he fed the sadhus affectionately. Through constant spiritual discourses he made the sadhus forget their physical bodies. They experienced the divine bliss of Akshardham. He inspired the sadhus to sing kirtans describing the form and glory of Maharaj. He made them recite the Vachanamrut and conduct religious discussions.

The sadhus also got an opportunity of serving Bhagatji. Of late he was not keeping well. He had given up wearing shoes. Yagnapurushdasji used to rub his soles with a small emery stone and apply butter on the cuts. Other sadhus also served him in many ways. Till late in the night Bhagatji infused courage in the hearts of his disciple-sadhus by his talks. While discoursing on *agna* and *upasana* he said, “If you accept Shriji Maharaj as supreme and worship Him without aspiring for anything else, and observe the vow of *nishkam*, I shall take you to Akshardham.”

Once, Bhagatji asked the sadhus to prepare millet *rotla*, fried brinjal and buttermilk. Then he said, “Today, I want to feed you well. If you will eat as much as I wish, I will be at your command,” Bhagatji went on pressing the sadhus to eat more and more. With great difficulty Yagnapurushdasji finished three *rotla*. Bhagatji told him, “If you eat half a *rotlo* more, I’ll do whatever you say.”

It was not possible for Yagnapurushdasji to take even an extra morsel, yet he ate half a *rotlo* more to please Bhagatji.

Then the sadhus desired to apply *chandan* on Bhagatji’s body. They prepared a lot of *chandan* paste and applied it on Bhagatji’s body. They had a rare darshan of Bhagatji with sandalwood paste all over his body. Then, as desired by Yagnapurushdasji and the other sadhus, he embraced them all, besmearing them with *chandan*.

In Bhadrod, many were pleased by Bhagatji’s discourses and became *satsangis*. At times, he would talk all night and inspire the sadhus. Bhagatji felt pain when he saw the sadhus facing hardships, despite their saintliness. Often he would pray to Shriji Maharaj and Swami for relief.

Shriji Maharaj answered Bhagatji’s prayer. Acharya Viharilalji Maharaj sent a letter from Vartal asking Bhagatji to send the sadhus there. It was time to depart. When would they get such an opportunity of serving their spiritual master again? The sadhus

served him as if they were serving Shriji Maharaj. Yagnapurushdasji prepared *puranpoli* and Surti *dudhpak*. Bhagatji was pleased by this new variety. He blessed them and purified them. They were reluctant to depart, but following Bhagatji's command, they set off for Vartal.

22. End of Exile

On arriving at Vartal, the sadhus put up in a *haveli* opposite the main gate of the mandir. The Acharya Maharaj met them and instructed them to wear saffron robes. He sent Vignandasji and other sadhus to Khandesh. Yagnapurushdasji and some sadhus went on a spiritual tour of Gujarat.

Vignandasji attracted many people towards the Satsang in Khandesh. In samadhi some devotees saw the *murti* of Bhagatji next to Shriji Maharaj. A woman devotee was possessed by an evil spirit. As soon as she saw the *murti* of Bhagatji, the evil spirit left her and she became possessed by Bhagatji. She started behaving like Bhagatji and brought happiness to innumerable people. Thus Bhagatji's greatness spread in Khandesh. Devotees started visiting Mahuva to stay in the company of Bhagatji.

During this period, Acharya Maharaj arrived at Mahuva. He received Bhagatji with great respect and sent *thal* to him every day. He always asked Bhagatji to address the assembly and praised him before the sadhus and devotees. Acharya Maharaj graced Bhagatji's house by paying a visit.

In the year V.S. 1949 (1893 CE) a *murti-pratishtha* ceremony was to be held at Lakshmi Vadi in Gadhpur. Acharya Maharaj had sent a special invitation to Bhagatji. Bhagatji had invited devotees from Gujarat to attend the ceremony at Gadhpur. Yagnapurushdasji had come with his Sanskrit teacher, Rangacharya, from Vadodara. Everybody got an opportunity of meeting Bhagatji at Lakshmi Vadi as well as at the place where he was lodging. Rangacharya was greatly impressed by Bhagatji's darshan. Acharya Maharaj used to ask Bhagatji to discourse to the assembly of devotees.

Then, due to the insistence of the devotees of Gujarat, Bhagatji visited Nadiad. Here he stayed with Zaverilalbhai. People started arriving from everywhere to seek the company of Bhagatji. All of them brought offerings with them. Bhagatji discoursed about the supremacy of Shriji Maharaj, Swami as the manifestation of Akshar, and the need to seek the company of the Satpurush and observe celibacy. He visited the mandir both in the morning and evening and conducted religious discourses there. At night after singing the *cheshta*, he would return to the place where he was staying. Even there he discoursed till late at night. Certain devotees had the darshan of Shriji Maharaj on account of their association with Bhagatji.

23. Satsang with the Diwan of Vansda

Jhaverbhai Nathabhai Amin (of Virsad), the Diwan of Vansda, was inspired by Yagnapurushdasji's company and was longing for the darshan of and association with Bhagatji. He wrote three letters to Acharya Maharaj and the Kothari at Vartal expressing his earnest desire to meet Bhagatji. On receiving instructions from Acharya Maharaj and Kothari, Bhagatji arrived at Vansda, via Bilimora, along with four devotees. He invited Vignandasji from Khandesh to join him at Vansda. The Diwan accorded a hearty welcome to Bhagatji befitting his status and position. He and his wife attended to Bhagatji day and night.

They were Vedantins, so Bhagatji talked in detail about the five eternal realities – *jiva*, *ishwar*, *maya*, Brahman and Parabrahman with relevant quotations from the Vachanamrut and other scriptures. He also explained to them the significance of *agna* and *upasana*.

One night, after completing his routine *cheshta,* Bhagatji retired to bed. But then all of a sudden he got up and started chanting the name of God. The Diwan and other devotees also got up. After some time Bhagatji woke up and addressed the people sitting around him, "One who wants to realize God should remember Him incessantly. He must always wake up like this, and start singing in praise of God. A genuine seeker should fear like a deer and sleep like a crow. How can we have a sound sleep when we have innate enemies like our senses and *antahkaran?* Therefore, if while eating, drinking, sleeping or waking, one remembers God by singing his songs, then one can do whatever he desires."

While delving deep into the realms of Brahman and Parabrahman, Bhagatji often gave practical worldly guidance too, "If you want to become *brahmarup and* worship God then you should follow your dharma rigorously. Dharma sustains *jnan*. *Jnan* establishes *vivek* and kindles *vairagya*. *Vairagya* which is based on *jnan* liberates you from worldly desires and one develops love towards God. One should strictly follow the eleven commandments and think and act accordingly. Bhakti is like a faithful wife, it will follow dharma, and *jnan-vairagya* are the two sons; which also follow her." Thus, through such wonderful talks, Bhagatji taught the Diwan to derive pure joy from devotion to God. He made a solemn promise to Diwanji, "At the time of your death I will come with Maharaj to receive you."

The Maharaja of Vansda and other high officials used to come for Bhagatji's darshan. They were greatly impressed by Bhagatji's spiritual powers. The Maharaja received him in his palace.

After giving Diwan Saheb the immense pleasure of his company, Bhagatji left Vansda. The Diwan was so attached to Bhagatji that his heart became heavy when he left. From Vansda Bhagatji went to Chansad and then returned to Vartal. Acharya Maharaj was pleased to learn the news about Vansda. He had a turban tied on Bhagatji as a mark of honour. Then he took Acharya Maharaj's leave and arrived at Ahmedabad via Nadiad.

24. Jnan Yagna in Ahmedabad

Acharya Purushottamprasad Maharaj of Ahmedabad was pleased to receive Bhagatji. He made arrangements for Bhagatji and his group's stay in his own mansion and took personal interest in their comforts. The entire atmosphere of the mandir was transformed with the arrival of Bhagatji. Soon after the *mangala arti*, Bhagatji would address the assembly of devotees. Then at the time of *shangar* he would lead the singing of kirtans. Again till *rajbhog* he would give religious discourses. In the afternoon he would discourse on the Vachanamrut and make all the devotees focus their *indriyas* and do the rosary at least ten times. In the evening also, till *cheshta*, he would talk to the assembly about the supremacy of Maharaj and inspire them to become *aksharrup*. Frequently, he instructed the devotees of Gujarat to sponsor meals. These things greatly pleased the devotees.

At this time Yagnapurushdasji was in Mahemdavad. He talked about the spiritual powers of Bhagatji to many devotees and inspired them to go to Ahmedabad for his darshan.

Once, during his religious discourses, Bhagatji talked about the importance of *brahmacharya,* "God is pleased only by *brahmacharya*. Radiance emanates from the forehead of a person who observes celibacy. When he bathes, the drops of water which fall from his tuft are caught by the gods before they touch the ground. Even the gods find this *vrat* difficult to observe. Since His manifestation on earth, Shriji Maharaj has strongly enforced the practice of this vow. Therefore, those who want to realize *ekantik dharma* must observe celibacy rigorously, control the senses, dine only once, remember God incessantly, meditate forgetting everything, and not entertain thoughts of women and other temptations. By these means *brahmacharya* can be observed. Therefore, woe be to the renunciants, who after renunciation fail to observe this *vrat*."

In Mahemdavad Yagnapurushdasji regularly visited the railway station and enquired about Bhagatji from those who returned from Ahmedabad after visiting Bhagatji. He constantly yearned to have the darshan of Bhagatji. He became impatient. One day, he went to Ahmedabad in the company of a sadhu. Bhagatji at first told him off for coming to Ahmedabad, but other sadhus and devotees requested him to receive Yagnapurushdasji with love. He changed his attitude and welcomed him.

Whenever a meal was sponsored by Bhagatji's followers, Acharya Maharaj served food himself. In this way, he favoured Bhagatji. Also, the sadhus and devotees were pleased by Bhagatji's presence since they experienced divine bliss in his company. Thus, many senior *satsangis* from the city also sought his darshan and company as they were greatly drawn to his divine *murti*.

Very frequently Bhagatji used to address the sadhus in the mandir. Once he told them all to tell the rosary and concentrate upon the divine *murti* of Shriji Maharaj. He said, "A businessman keeps his eye on the price of wheat, jaggery and ghee because he has to make a profit from them. In the same manner, if we keep our eye on the divine *murti* of Maharaj, we too can earn profit in terms of divine bliss. Remember God all the

time and do not forget Him even for a second. After renouncing the world if we forget God then what has been renounced?" Thus he used to impress upon sadhus the need to seek communion with God.

Once, as desired by Bhagatji, Yagnapurushdasji addressed the assembly about the qualities and glory of a Satpurush. Bhagatji was so pleased with him by his talks that he got up and put his palms on the head of Yagnapurushdasji to bless him. A stunned devotee remarked, "How is it that you, a householder, are placing your hands on the head of a sadhu?"

Bhagatji nonchalantly replied, "It is Bhagwan Swaminarayan, not I, who has placed His hands." The devotee realized the meaning of these words and became quiet.

The *hindola* festival was being celebrated in the mandir. Bhagatji said, "Shri Nar Narayan is known as the emperor of India. So, when Maharaj incarnated in India, He brought him as His guide. Shri Nar Narayan had served Maharaj, therefore, Maharaj built a mandir here and dedicated it to him. But he is not the principal deity. Once in the eastern *roop choki*, holding the hand of Anand Swami, Maharaj had observed, 'Such innumerable Nar-Narayans and Lakshmi-Narayans stand on one foot and worship this *murti* incessantly.' Thus, Shriji Maharaj explained the supreme *upasana*. I am just an ordinary tailor. I remove two stitches and stitch another two. I help you shun wealth and women and join your soul unto God and His Sadhu."

He allowed Yagnapurushdasji to stay with him for a few days and then permitted him to return to Mahemdavad. He commanded him to pursue the studies of shastras and jokingly said, "Your slight build does not befit a leader. A leader should build his body." Yagnapurushdasji had taken a *murti* of Thakorji with him. He gave it to Bhagatji to sanctify. Bhagatji became very happy to see it and then as if he were watching Maharaj's figure in person observed, "The nose is a bit long, Maharaj's nose was not so long." He kept the *murti* pressed against his chest for nearly an hour and then returned it to Yagnapurushdasji.

Carts loaded with sand for washing hands had come to the mandir. The *parshads* were emptying the carts. When Bhagatji saw this he, too, joined them and started emptying the cart, basket after basket. The devotees who were watching them followed Bhagatji and the work was completed in no time. His special status in the Satsang never stopped him from doing manual labour. He never felt belittled in doing such menial jobs. This impressed all the sadhus and devotees.

25. Bhagatji's Magnetic Personality

Sitaba, the wife of Rao Saheb of Vadodara, saw Bhagatji along with Shriji Maharaj for five successive days during *samadhi*. She was overcome with emotion. Rao Saheb invited Bhagatji to Vadodara. Both, Rao Saheb and his wife became very happy by his darshan and served him with love and devotion. He visited the mandir and persuaded Rangacharyaji to associate with a sadhu who possesses the redemptive virtues of God.

He explained to him the real value of scholarship, “After reading the scriptures, if one does not contemplate on the redemptive virtues of God, that knowledge is of no use.” Rangacharyaji, through association with Yagnapurushdasji, was enlightened about Bhagatji’s God-realized state.

The householders who stayed continuously with Bhagatji were inspired by him to observe *shvet-dharma* – a vow to avoid the company of women. Thus he inspired them to overcome desires. He taught them how to worship God. He advised, “Remember God with your eyes wide open without blinking.” He used to demonstrate this by offering prayers without blinking his eyes and by giving a detailed description of Maharaj, from head to toe, while remaining in that state. Everyone was surprised by this.

Then, he left for Mahuva. Many devotees from Gujarat accompanied him upto Vadhwan. After arriving at Mahuva he told eighteen thousand *malas* for the welfare of the devotees. He continuously sat in meditation, offered worship and told the devotees, “Remember God while performing your worldly duties. Shriji Maharaj had told Somla Khachar to engrave the *murti* in his heart and preserve it otherwise one would lament afterwards.”

Many devotees from Gujarat came to experience the company of Bhagatji. During this period Swami Vignandasji, the most beloved and *param ekantik* disciple of Bhagatji, left for Chhapaiya in accordance with the wishes of Acharya Maharaj. He had sought communion with Bhagatji during his stay in Ahmedabad. After arriving in Chhapaiya, Vignandas Swami passed away to Akshardham following a short illness. This caused great distress to all the disciples close to Bhagatji.

Bhagatji’s glory was spreading very fast all over Gujarat. Shri Ganpatbhai, a wealthy resident of Bharuch was an authority on the Vachanamrut. He realized the greatness of Bhagatji. Accompanied by Shri Jethabhai of Pij he left Valsad for Mahuva by boat. Their boat was caught in a storm but Bhagatji protected them all. They reached Mahuva safely. Ganpatbhai was immensely satisfied by Bhagatji’s darshan. He understood that the Satpurush was the gateway to *moksha*. Bhagatji also explained to him the deeper meanings of the Vachanamrut. He revealed his own experiences which convinced Ganpatbhai further.

Bhagatji saw in him a sincere seeker. So he blessed him and asked him to maintain *satsang*. Ganpatbhai wished to return by rail, but by the wish of Bhagatji he went by boat. There was no trouble during their voyage and they reached home in one day.

Thus the devotees would go to Mahuva to seek Bhagatji’s company in spite of the great hardships that they had to undergo on their way. Once a group of the devotees from Gujarat arrived at Mahuva. They sang devotional songs all the way from the port to the mandir where they had the darshan of Bhagatji. Seeing this, a Lohana resident, who had been instigated by someone, started abusing the devotees. A jealous Brahmin villager went to the extent of slapping Bhagatji. But Bhagatji remained calm. The devotees from Gujarat could not bear to see this so they pushed him aside.

Later, Bhagatji scolded the devotees and said, “We should tolerate.” Then he added, “One should always side with a devotee of God.” Though the incident had created

some bitterness in Mahuva, nothing untoward happened because of Bhagatji's influence. Bhagatji gave the devotees much bliss before they left. Thereafter, due to the opposition of sadhus at the festival in Vartal, devotees were forbidden to go to Mahuva. But nothing could deter the courageous devotees. They continued to go to Mahuva to pay their respects to Bhagatji.

Those devotees who went to Mahuva got an opportunity of having Bhagatji's darshan and company.

Bhagatji used to tell them, "Maharaj's manifest form here on an Earth is as divine as that which dwells in Akshardham. There is no difference. Only if you accept this truth, will you succeed in your endeavours. You will all have to become like Jadbharat. Otherwise, there will be no happiness. Is it not better to return to Akshardham than to rot in this hell of sense gratification?" Thus Bhagatji always used to talk about associating with God and His holy Sadhu.

26. Jal-Jhilani Celebration at Gadhada

In V.S. 1952 (1896 CE), Yagnapurushdasji, in consultation with Acharya Maharaj, invited Bhagatji to Gadhada to participate in the Jal Jhilani festival. The devotees were informed accordingly and all of them assembled at Gadhada.

On this occasion, Bhagatji used to give darshan to the devotees at the Lakshmi Vadi mandir and at the seats of Acharya Maharaj and senior sadhus in the mandir. The Kothari had forbidden Bhagatji to discourse so he spoke sparingly.

Once Acharya Maharaj invited him to his seat and asked, "How does one experience God's bliss?" Bhagatji replied, "God's bliss is visible to one who adores God. All his ten senses become quiet and his four *antahkarans* experience eternal peace. One who has experienced God's bliss will not become attached to anything except the *murti* of God. Muktanand Swami has said that one who is dedicated to the guru experiences such bliss." Thus at times Acharya Maharaj sought communion with Bhagatji and experienced fulfilment.

Bhagatji talked openly to his beloved sadhus, "*Atmabuddhi* with the God-realized Sadhu is the only means to salvation. Shriji Maharaj has entrusted the key to *moksha* to such a Sadhu and the he is the gateway to *moksha*. Such a Sadhu should be served by thought, word and deed to attain *ekantik dharma*. But one should never insult him. Once Naga Bawas threatened Maharaj with their swords and asked Him to pluck spinach. Maharaj refused and replied, 'We are merciful but if someone looks at our devotee with an evil eye, we won't hesitate to pierce his eyes. If he causes pain with his hand we will cut it off. Such is our wrath.' Therefore, understand the principle that if anybody insults a devotee, he will face great troubles in his own life."

Then the sadhus asked him, "How do you meditate?" Bhagatji replied, "I don't know how to meditate. By the grace of Gunatitanand Swami I become oblivious of this body and I behold Maharaj the way I am beholding you presently. I withdraw my sense

of hearing, the moment I hear something. I know this much, I don't know anything else. Therefore those who want to realize God should bravely control the senses and *antahkaran*."

"When is true knowledge said to have been attained?"

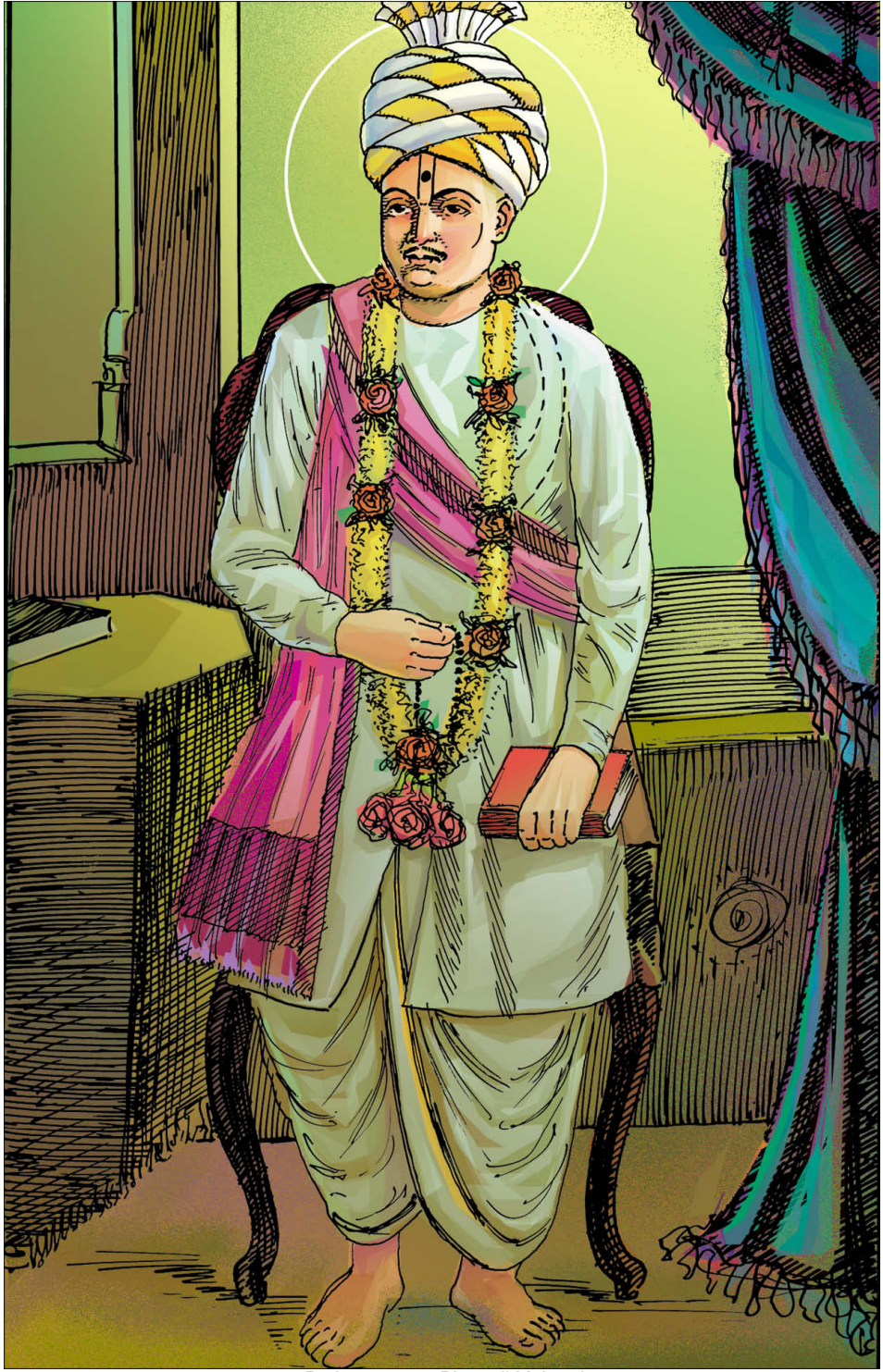
"Just as the sword and sheath remain separate from each other, similarly, when the *atma* and the body are realized as independent of each other then that is true *jnan*. No thoughts, except those of God, arise in the *antahkaran*. Desires are removed." He added, "How can one sleep quietly if one is chased by bandits in the form of the body, senses and *antahkaran*? One should not give in to the instincts of lust, anger, etc. One should fight as a tiger against them and pray for Maharaj's help. One should pray, 'O Maharaj, please dwell in my heart, forever.'" Thus he spoke tremendously about becoming *brahmarup* and associating with God.

During this festival, devotees sought Bhagatji's instructions on the education of Yagnapurushdasji. Bhagatji said, "If arrangements can be made in Rajkot he should continue his studies. But, there is no need for him to go to Kashi. Yagnapurushdasji is a brush which cleans the devotees from within."

Once, Bhagatji was sitting with Mana Bhagat who advised Bhagatji, "Life is short so you should not become attached to your *babula*-like disciples, otherwise you will have to take them to Dham." Bhagatji replied, "How can such devotees be called *babula?* I see in them the *murti* of Brahman. If we call them *babula* our *jiva* shall perish. If it is Maharaj's wish, I would like to live with such godly devotees for many lives to come."

Thus Bhagatji used to inspire the devotees with the glory of God and His devotees, "However much one may talk about *atma* one cannot become *atmarup*. One has to offer *bhakti* with a full understanding of God's glory. As a girl suffering from tuberculosis dies before attaining youth, similarly, bhakti without understanding of God's glory never ripens. It is destroyed. The redemptive attributes develop in the heart of a man who has bhakti together with understanding of God's glory." Then he returned to Mahuva.

27. Grand Reception at Junagadh



Brahmaswarup Bhagatji Maharaj

Since his excommunication from the Satsang Bhagatji Maharaj had not visited

Junagadh. He could not go to Junagadh due to opposition and the absence of Acharya Maharaj's orders. But Yagnapurushdasji decided to accord a grand reception to Bhagatji at the very place where he had been insulted. In V.S. 1953 (1897 CE) on the occasion of the Janmashtami festival at Junagadh he persuaded Acharya Maharaj to invite Bhagatji to Junagadh.

Bhagatji Maharaj arrived at Junagadh. He was received along with Acharya Maharaj at Junagadh railway station with all the traditional pomp. Like Acharya Maharaj, Bhagatji Maharaj and his followers were driven in a decorated cart. Special arrangements were made at the mandir to make their stay comfortable. Yagnapurushdasji was assisted by Kothari Jibhai in making these arrangements for Bhagatji.

The news of Bhagatji's arrival in Junagadh spread all over the city. All the Nagar devotees came to the mandir for Bhagatji's darshan. Here, he met old sadhus, Balmukunddasji and Jaga Bhagat, who had lived with Gunatitanand Swami. He asked his devotees to sponsor meals in the mandir. Then he served the sadhus and devotees most affectionately.

During the festival days, Bhagatji used to visit the assembly hall. He used to call on Acharya Maharaj, eminent *sadgurus* and Jaga Swami. Wherever he went, he engaged himself in delivering discourses. All the old sadhus and devotees knew very well that Bhagatji was Gunatitanand Swami's favourite disciple. They also knew that he had won Swami's favour, so they paid their respects by prostrating to him. A Nagar devotee named Dr. Umiyashankar once asked his guru Balmukunddasji, "How is it that Pragji Bhakta, a tailor, sits on a cot and the sadhus prostrate to him?"

Balmukunddas Swami smiled and said, "You don't know Pragji Bhakta. He has pleased Gunatitanand Swami so much that even if we offer him a throne made of gold and perform *arti* with lamps made from gold, it would fall short of his status and eminence."

On this occasion, the beloved Nagar devotees of Gunatitanand Swami – Chakubhai, Sadashankarbhai and others were overwhelmed with joy at the sight of Bhagatji. They recalled the old memories of their days together and said, "Pragbha, Pragbha, you swallowed all the nectar offered by Swami and didn't leave a drop of it for others." Bhagatji, too was glad to meet them all.

Bhagatji narrated how he had sought the company of Swami and how he had served him by carrying out his commands. He blessed the devotees by explaining how to become *brahmarup* and join with God.

Bhagatji advised, "One should always remain vigilant and find out which virtues one possesses. Then one will be sure to win the favour of the God-realized Sadhu. Such a Sadhu in turn will make one great like him. What is the use of our communion with the Satpurush, if we cannot avail of the 'Sach-chid-anand' bliss which he enjoys? One should, therefore, offer sincere devotion and seek God's bliss. There are three types of joy:

Vishāyanandi jakta hai, bhajanānandi Haridās,
Paramānandi jivanmukta hai, jyāki bhayi vāsnā nāsh.

(The world derives pleasure from sense gratification; a devotee derives it from devotional songs, the *jivanmukta* whose desires have been extinguished enjoys the bliss of God.)

"By joining ourselves with such a God-realized Sadhu one can experience the joy that he experiences.

"Bhakti means to form a habit of seeing the great qualities of the great Sadhu. Bhakti is life – it is like the *jiva*. What's the use of a body which has only *indriyas* and *antahkaran* and no *jiva*? Similarly *vairagya*, *jnan*, *dharma* are meaningless if there is no bhakti. Bhakti is the *jiva*, *vairagya* are the legs, dharma is the heart and *jnan* is the eyes. One who chants *bhajans* and does not allow *adharma* to take hold becomes *brahmarup*.

"Animals are more sincere than men. If someone gives a piece of bread to a dog, it will follow him everywhere. If it is driven away, it would certainly go away but would guard one's house. Therefore, we should cultivate at least a dog's attitude. The slightest insult upsets us. Understand for sure that your bread lies in Satsang.

"It is very difficult to overcome our *granthis*. Complete detachment dispels the *sneh-granthi*; realization of God removes *sanshay-granthi;* knowledge destroys *aham-granthi*; steadfastness in the self takes away *mamatva-granthi*. Complete dedication to dharma burns out *maithun-granthi* or *hriday-granthi*."

During this festival Jaga Swami and Bhagatji Maharaj used to call on each other and discuss spiritual matters. Jaga Swami used to praise Bhagatji before the devotees. He once observed, "It is our great fortune to have Bhagatji Maharaj among us. He is the guru of the *gunatit* garden planted by Gunatitanand Swami."

Bhagatji supported Jaga Swami's observations. He used to say, "By attaining all the worldly objects of sense gratification one experiences physical happiness in this world, but ultimately one will be condemned to hell. Only by the company of the Sadhu is the *antahkaran* purified."

He then narrated an anecdote:

"There was a Vaishnav devotee who always bathed and remained pure in his diet and travellings. He was steadfast and derived pleasure from devotion to God. Once he was out on business. He could not concentrate during his daily prayers. He asked his landlord as to why it was so. The landlord explained, 'The well from which you have brought water is impure.' So, he went to fetch water from another well. Then he was able to concentrate. Therefore, it is necessary for a devotee to observe purity in matters of food, etc. to steady the *antahkaran*. Then only will the *antahkaran* become pure and will you be able to remember God.

"The *jiva* looks after the body. At night one goes for a stroll. Thus, in many ways one endeavours in bringing pleasures to the body. But so long as one hasn't surrendered his mind to the guru he has not done anything. Therefore, the *indriyas* and *antahkaran* should be controlled. They shouldn't be allowed to drift towards the objects of sense gratification. The *jiva* has become addicted to the pleasure of the five senses. But the pleasure so derived is as short-lived as a grass fire which dies out instantly."

Then he asked Yagnapurushdasji to recite verses in praise of the guru and said, "One who removes darkness from the heart is a guru. One who is pure within and

without is a guru. One, on seeing whom the mind is not deviated and who makes us steadfast is a guru. One who removes all the *doshas* from his disciples and purifies them is a guru. If one goes out in search of such a guru with the heart of a seeker one shall certainly find him. Therefore, one should recognize the Satpurush who has attained the *brahmic state*.

"Once a calf became separated from his mother and went to a cowshed in which there were bulls only. Whenever the calf tried to get milk, it received kicks from the bulls. Its mouth became swollen without getting even a drop of milk. Then, it could not suck milk even from its own mother. Thus if one leaves the Satpurush and turns to a lesser being, then one will receive kicks only.

"One should be like a dove. It falls headlong at the command of his master who catches it in the air. If we can cast all our cares to the Satpurush and carry out his commands there is nothing to worry about. He will look after us."

Thus by participating in the festival at Junagadh, Bhagatji fulfilled all the desires of Yagnapurushdasji. He had given all the sadhus and devotees the bliss of his company and then took leave of Acharya Maharaj and left for Gondal. Jaga Swami could not control his tears at the time of parting. The two beloved disciples of Gunatitanand Swami embraced for the last time and parted.

28. The Last Phase

While at Gondal, Yagnapurushdasji sought Bhagatji's opinion about his studies. Bhagatji said, "You have mastered all the shastras and I have completely taught you *brahmavidya*. Now make everyone as happy as you are." So saying, Bhagatji appointed Yagnapurushdasji as the guru and blessed him.

On reaching Mahuva, Bhagatji fell ill. It appeared as if he had decided to go to Akshardham. He called some of the devotees to Mahuva for the last darshan. Jetha Bhagat rushed from Mumbai to Mahuva leaving aside his work as *kothari* to serve Bhagatji. Devotees from all corners of Gujarat began to pour in for the last darshan. Bhagatji had given up food. His condition was deteriorating, his illness worsening.

Yet, Bhagatji gave strength to all and discoursed to them. When he went to the mandir for darshan on the day of *annakut*, thousands of devotees had his darshan. He said, "Those who have had my darshan even once I will take them to Akshardham."

The devotees frequently prayed to Bhagatji to stay on this earth longer and not remain unhealthy. The *vaidya* from Chansad, Mansukhbhai, came. He prescribed some medications and milk according to Bhagatji's condition. But Bhagatji did not take them. Bhagatji told Yagnapurushdasji not to come to Mahuva. But his mind was continuously focused on Bhagatji. So, he wrote a letter to Bhagatji requesting him to regain good health. But Bhagatji's health continued to deteriorate. The devotees lovingly served Bhagatji in every way, but were sad to see him ill.

Bhagatji's condition became critical from the morning of Kartik *sud* 13, V.S. 1954 (7

November 1898 CE). He used to do *puja* regularly after his morning bath. But that day, he could not attend even to his bodily needs. He was surrounded by Prabhudas and other devotees. Suddenly Bhagatji started speaking, “Take me to Vartal.” So saying, all of a sudden, he got up and sat in a *swastik asan*, stopped his breath and pulse and remained motionless. Thus concentrating, on the Shriji Maharaj, Bhagatji independently returned to Akshardham. The devotees failed to understand this phenomenon. They laid him on the bed and felt his pulse, which had already stopped.

They were all shocked, as if they had been struck by lightning. They all started crying bitterly. Kothari Jetha Bhagat consoled and pacified them.

Bhagatji’s body was laid on the floor and they all started chanting the *dhun*. Soon this sad news spread all over the town. He was loved and revered by one and all. Thousands of people thronged there for darshan. Bhagatji had instructed the devotees in advance that his last rites be performed according to the customs of his community, but they should not use sandalwood, etc.

Accordingly, the next morning, in the presence of thousands of devotees, his mortal body was cremated in the farm of Fulchand Sheth, situated on the bank of the river Malan.

Hearing this news, Yagnapurushdasji felt as if the heavens had come down upon him. He became extremely unhappy and grieved so much that he fainted while going for a bath. Shriji Maharaj appeared to him and said, “I Have not gone. I dwell forever in you.”

So saying, Shriji Maharaj took a garland of roses and jasmine from His neck and garlanded Yagnapurushdasji. A sadhu who had accompanied him was lucky enough to witness this rare sight. Yagnapurushdasji’s grief disappeared. All could understand the significance of Shriji Maharaj’s divine words that He remains manifest in the person of a *param ekantik* sadhu like Yagnapurushdasji, popularly known as Shastriji Maharaj.

29. Divinity Revealed

Bhagatji Maharaj leads the devotees through the flooded river Shetrunji

In V.S. 1914 (1858 CE), Bhagatji was going to Junagadh to pay respects to Gunatitanand Swami. He was accompanied by the devotees of Mahuva. Due to heavy rains the Shetrunji was flooded. The current was so powerful that the boatman and the travellers were all held up on the riverbank.

Bhagatji encouraged the devotees by saying, "Let us remember Maharaj and Swami and we shall be able to cross safely." So saying, he led the devotees. The boatman tried to dissuade him from going across the river. But he fears nothing who has before his eyes the *murti* of Maharaj and Swami. The water was only chest deep when they reached halfway. Even the current was not so strong. The devotees followed Bhagatji. The boatman and others who were watching the scene from the bank were amazed, and marvelled at the faith and courage of the devotees!

On the way a devotee was bitten by a dog. Bhagatji soothed him with his touch and the pain vanished. Proceeding further, Bhagatji's elder brother, Narsinhbhai, was bitten by a poisonous snake. All got frightened but Bhagatji consoled them saying, "Pray to Maharaj, everything will be alright." Soon he felt relief because of the divine power of the Swaminarayan mantra and the blessings of a Satpurush. Then they encountered robbers. The devotees offered them food. While the thieves were busy eating, the devotees managed to escape. In spite of such innumerable hardships, the devotees from Mahuva never missed a chance to go for Swami's darshan with Bhagatji.

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In V.S. 1943 (1887 CE), Bhagatji led a group of devotees to Gadhada. It was raining heavily and it was very dark, visibility was poor and the road was full of thorns and stones. The devotees were greatly troubled and frustrated. Then Bhagatji made them sit

in a circle and asked them to hold one another's toes and pray with their eyes shut. After some time he woke them up. To their surprise they found themselves sitting on the banks of the river Ghela at Gadhada. Thus, in no time, Bhagatji placed them all in Gadhada.

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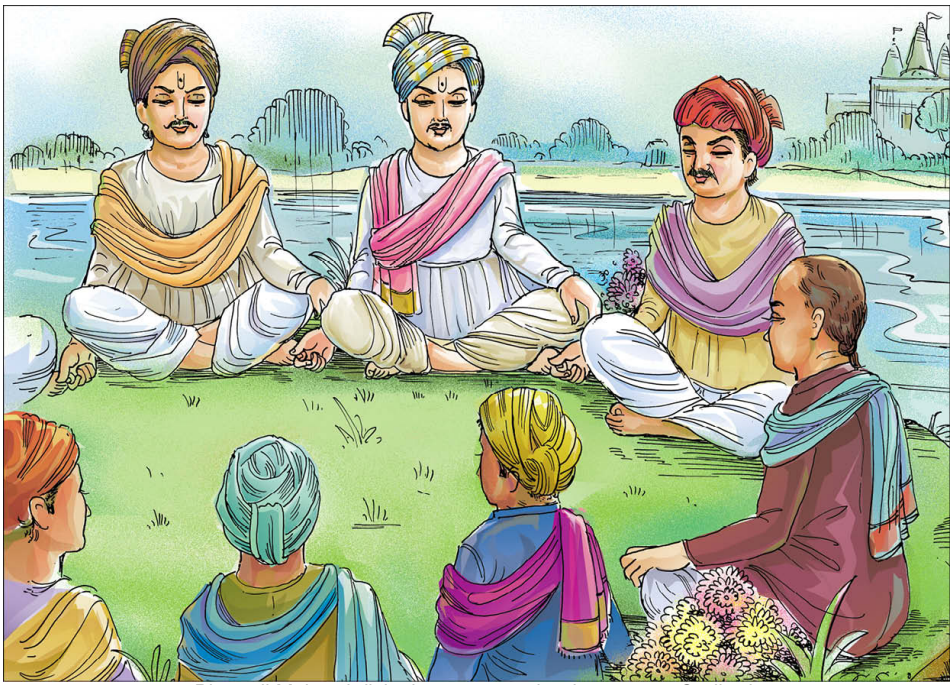

Bhagatji Maharaj divinely transports the devotees to Gadhada

Once, Kanji Darji of Mahuva went to Gadhpur with Bhagatji. Both of them were sewing garments for Thakorji. Acharya Maharaj arrived at Gadhada from Vartal. Devotees went to receive him. Bhagatji and Kanjibhai also joined the devotees for darshan. Acharya Maharaj was pleased to see Bhagatji there. He took off the rose garland from his neck and offered it to Bhagatji, who in turn gave it over to Kanjibhai. From then onwards Kanjibhai began to continuously see the *murtis* of Shriji Maharaj and Swami. After three years, when he married, the vision disappeared.

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There was an outbreak of cholera in Mahuva. Vitthalbhai's daughter-in-law contracted it. Whenever anybody prayed to Bhagatji to cure a victim of cholera, he would ask him to offer oil to Hanumanji and the victim would be cured. Vitthalbhai tried this, but his daughter-in-law was not cured. So he went to Bhagatji and said, "I offered oil to Hanumanji but the disease was not cured."

Bhagatji told him, "Who had told you to offer oil to Hanumanji?"

Vitthalbhai replied, "I did it because you ask so many others to do so."

Bhagatji smiled and said, "You can't succeed if you follow your own will. Now I command you to go again and offer oil to the *murti* of Hanumanji that has been sanctified by Shriji Maharaj." He carried out the orders and his daughter-in-law

recovered.

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In V.S. 1951 (1895 CE), Bhagatji was in Mahuva. A Brahmin came to his house and stared into his eyes without blinking. Bhagatji asked him. “Maharaj, what are you gazing at? You will find Shriji Maharaj in every pore of my body.”

The Brahmin replied, “You are perfectly right, Bhagatji. I see Shriji Maharaj in both of your eyes. That’s why I have been staring at you.”

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During his final illness, Bhagatji’s condition was very critical. He was confined to bed. Meanwhile, it was time for the Annakut festival. In Mahuva mandir the festival was sponsored by Bhagatji. Bhagatji decided to go to the mandir. All his devotees were surprised at this decision. On the day of *annakut*, Bhagatji got up and donned new clothes, a turban and *khes*. He used his *yogic* powers and helped by two attendants started walking towards the mandir before the devotees could arrange for any vehicle.

Bhagatji reached the mandir, had darshan and then sat down against the second pillar to the right of the dome. The thousands of devotees who had thronged to the mandir for the *annakut* darshan, were lucky to have darshan of the luminous personality of Bhagatji. They all praised Bhagatji. Fulchandbhai’s father, Khimjibhai, had come there with a carriage to take Bhagatji home. On his way home Bhagatji told Jetha Bhagat, “Blessed are those who had my darshan today.” How gracious he was!

Glossary

A

adharma unrighteousness

agna tenet, commandment

aksharrup form of Akshar.

annakut festival in which varieties of vegetarian delicacies are offered to God

antahkaran conscience

anuvrutti to follow intuitively

arti lighted wicks

asan posture; seat

atma soul

atmabuddhi intense affection

atmarup behaving as atma

avatar incarnation

B

babula weaklings

bhagwati diksha initiation into a sadhu in saffron robes

bhajan song singing the glory of god

bhakta devotee

bhakti devotion

bhandari store-keeper

Bhim Ekadashi Jeth sud 11

Brahman Aksharbrahman

brahmacharya celibacy

brahmajnan knowledge of Brahman

brahmarup form of Brahman

brahmavidya knowledge of Brahman

brahmic pertaining to Brahman

C

chandan sandalwood

cheshta verses describing the daily routine and divine form of Shriji Maharaj

chintamani wish-fulfilling gem

D

dandvat prostration

Darbar a regional ruler

darshan to see with reverence and devotion

Dham short form for Akshardham, abode of Bhagwan Swaminarayan

dharma righteousness

dhoti a garment wrapped round the waist and tucked to dress the lower part of the body.

dhun chanting the name of God

dhyan meditation

diksha initiation

divyabhav to firmly believe that God and His Sadhu are divine

Diwan minister

dosh moral flaws

dudhpak sweet, thickened milk with rice

E

ekadashi the eleventh day of each half of a lunar month

ekantik bhakta god-realized devotee

ekantik dharma collective term for dharma, jnan, vairagya and bhakti.

ekantik sthiti brahmic state

F

fagva prasadi sanctified food of popcorn and dates.

fakir Muslim mendicant or ascetic

Fagan a month of the Hindu calendar (February-March)

Fuldol festival of colours

G

jnan knowledge; wisdom

jnani a wise person

gorakh a type of yogic posture

granthi complex

guna innate nature

Gunatit transcends the three gunas

H

haveli mansion

hindola swing

hriday-granthi desires

Hutashani Holi festival

I

ishwar second of the five eternal realities

J

Jal Jhilani Ekadashi Bhadarva sud 11

Jamadar head constable

Janmashtami birthday of Shri Krishna, Shravan sud 8.

jiva soul

jivanmukta redeemed during this very life

K

kalyan salvation; liberation

Kartik A month of the Hindu lunar calendar (October-November)

khatras an observance in which only food devoid of the six types of taste – sweet, salty, bitter, sour, spicy – is eaten.

khes silken scarf

Khuda God

kirtan devotional song

kothari chief administrator of mandir

M

mahant chief priest; pontifical head of a mandir

mahaprasad sanctified food

maithun-granthi lust

mala rosary

mamatva-granthi attachment to self

mandal group

mangala arti first arti of the day, performed at sunrise

maya third of the eternal realities

moksha redemption

Mul Akshar the eternal and primordial form of Akshar

murti image; idol

murti-pratishtha consecration of murti in a mandir

N

naivedya food offered to a deity

nishchay absolute faith

nishkam vrat vow of celibacy

P

paras philosopher's stone – magical stone which turns iron into gold

paravidya wisdom of God

parna breaking of fast

parshad male renunciant in white robes

pativrata fidelity

pranam obeisance offered with folded hands

prasad consecrated food

puja worship

pujan religious rites

punya merits

puranpoli sweet delicacy

R

rajbhog arti third arti of the day performed after lunch has been offered to the deities

rotlo millet bread

S

sadguru senior sadhu

sadhak a person endeavouring on the spiritual path

samadhi trance

sangh group

sanshay-granthi doubts

Sach-chid-anand truth-consciousness-joy

satsang good company; spiritual association

satsangi one who practices satsang

seva service

sevak one who serves

shangar arti second arti of the day; performed after breakfast has been offered and the murtis have adorned with garments, ornaments and garlands.

shvet dharma a vow to avoid the company of women

sneh attachment

sud bright half of each lunar month of the Hindu calendar

swadharma one's own dharma

swarup form

swarupnishtha understanding and resolve in the true form of God

swastik asan cross-legged posture

T

thal offering of food to the deities

U

upasana philosophical understanding of the nature of God; mode of worship

V

vairagya detachment

vartman vows

vishay worldly pleasure

vrat a spiritual observance

V.S. Vikram Samvat – the Hindu year from the reign of King Vikram